

Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Lecture 3, Beatitudes, Part 3

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This is Dr. Bill Mounce in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session 3, Beatitudes, Part 3.

Okay, well, welcome back and we'll finish out the Beatitudes and the Salt and Light and then we'll see where we are time-wise.

How's that? All right. Frank has a no-tell policy. He asks when I finish, and I don't have to tell him, so we'll be done when we're done.

See where that is. Okay. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Okay. I thought you were just getting charismatic on this and amening. You don't have to get charismatic.

All right. Oh, okay. You know, I always thought that the school I teach at Tacoma is largely African-American, and being prayed over by a charismatic African-American is quite an experience, one that I really enjoyed.

The first time it happened, they pressed on me so hard I couldn't breathe, but they were just doing what they did. What I found is that's nothing compared to Chinese charisma. My goodness, do they believe prayer does something? And first, it's Chinese, so it's Chinese.

You know how Chinese people always sound like they're angry? Have you ever noticed that? That's the intonational system of the language. So, my last name in Chinese is not Meng, it's Meng. If you say Meng, they go, no, that's not a word.

Meng. Okay. But anyway, so when they get praying, they really get praying.

It's fun. I enjoyed it. I didn't understand a word of it, but that didn't matter.

I don't know. Okay. Beatitude number five, blessed are the merciful.

The focus kind of starts turning a bit here to how we relate to others, but the next beatitude is kind of personal as well. So, I don't know if there's any real turn, but it feels like it a bit. Blessed are the mercy.

One of the central truths of Christianity, right? Mercy. And it's, again, it's one of those qualities that very few, if any, other world religions hold up as a virtue. Mercy is not a big deal in a lot of religions.

What is mercy? Mercy is defined as having compassion for people in need. It's really easy to confuse mercy and grace. Grace is God's compassion for people who don't deserve it.

Mercy is God's compassion for those in need. And there's, in essence, there's two parts to the biblical understanding of mercy. There's a heart of compassion, the attitude of mercy, and then the actions.

So, God has pity on us, and so his condition of mercy moves him to act, and therefore he saves us. Someone wants to find mercy as compassion with feet. I like that.

Mercy is compassion that does something. It just doesn't sit there and go, oh, you know, I feel merciful. You can't even say that, can you? You say, I feel merciful.

If you feel merciful, you're going to do something about it. So, mercy is compassion with feet, having compassion for people in need, and therefore doing something with it. And again, if you look at other than the salutations, most of the discussions of mercy in the Bible have to do with this heart of compassion that actually does something.

Okay, so compassion with feet. I got a quote from Quarles that I thought was pretty good on this Quarles. I'm working on it.

I'm working on my 62. It's from Calvin. He says, they are blessed who are not only prepared to put up with their own troubles, but also take on other people's, to help them in distress freely, to join them in their time of trial, and as it were, to get right into their situation that they may gladly expend themselves on their assistance.

That was a good description of mercy, of compassion with feet. Of course, there are a couple of really strong biblical models of mercy. The Good Samaritan would be the positive one.

He had mercy on the injured man and did something about it. The negative example is the unmerciful servant, the servant who has forgiven kajillions of dollars and then turns around and won't forgive a very minor debt. And the master says, you know, you should have had mercy because I had mercy on you.

So, the prime positive and negative examples of mercy in the Bible, one of the interesting things about mercy and this beatitude in particular, is that it doesn't tell us who we should be merciful toward. And that's the point.

Mercy doesn't depend upon its object. We don't have mercy because someone deserves it. If someone deserves it, we don't call it mercy; we call it something else.

But mercy is simply compassion on people in need that moves you to do something. But people don't, in a sense, deserve mercy. So how do you do this? Just a second.

How do you do this? How do you become a merciful person? The answer obviously is a golden chain, isn't it? You can't just say, today, I'm going to be a merciful person. It doesn't work. You'll never have compassion if you just simply if it's just another thing to do.

But it's the chain. It's moving from spiritual depravity all the way through. The way I like to say it is this.

Mercy sees people for who they could be. I think that's a helpful ditty on mercy. Mercy looks at people for who they could be.

Do you have irregular people in your life? Yeah, yeah, okay. I have some people in my life who absolutely hate me. They hate me with a passion that I didn't know that you could have for another person.

Just hates me. And I had to learn how to relate to this person and how to extend mercy because all the other emotions are right there.

Retaliation, well, I'm right, and you're wrong. I mean, that's easy. But how can I show this person mercy? And there actually were two keys for me.

One was, and I only do it imperfectly because I'm learning, that I have to look at that person for who they could be, not for who they are.

Still in the image of God. Lots of good qualities. Who could they be? That helps me.

The other thing, and it's related to that, is to view sin in your irregular person's life. To view sin as a foreign object. Now, let me tell you where this comes from.

I sat down. Tom Schreiner is a very good friend of mine. He teaches at Southern and writes all the New Testament theologies, mostly books on law. I was talking to him once about legalism, and I said, "Help me understand."

There are things I don't understand about legalism. So that was the general context of the conversation. And we were talking about depravity and sin and whatnot.

And I don't remember exactly what he said, but what I took away from it was that sin is a foreign object in your body. And it's not a passive thing. I think when I was younger, I thought of sin as, well, it's just, I sin.

And I didn't really think of sin as a foreign entity that was actively, aggressively trying to make me sin. But, of course, that's what sin is, isn't it? This is why Paul can say again in Romans 7 that it's not I who sin, but it's the sin that's sinning. And sin is a foreign entity.

It is a force. It is a power. And it wants to make you sin.

It's not passive at all, right? And that was a really helpful distinction for me. So when I know I'm supposed to extend mercy, and my natural reaction is not to, the mental gymnastics I go through is, who could this person be if it were not for the power of sin in their life? And when I go through that, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But when it works, it helps me see past the hatred and the anger and whatnot.

To see who that person could be if sin didn't have control of their life. And what I've found in terms of just how you go about extending mercy is that exercise really helps. The other exercise is the old saying, well, there, but for the grace of God, go I. And if we truly understand our spiritual depravity and mourn over it and hunger for God's righteousness and it has changed us, then when we see people that are the irregular people in our lives, we realize, you know, I am who I am not because I'm a good person.

I am who I am, not because I have a PhD. I'm not who I am because I'm a pastor. I am who I am because God is a God of grace who extended grace to me, who didn't make me suffer the full consequences of my sin that would have been permanent and damning.

And because I see God extending mercy to me and forgiving me, understanding that if it hadn't been for that, I wouldn't be who I am, it makes it easier, not automatic, obviously, but it makes it easier for me to look at the world, separating them from who they are with the power of sin from who they could be if their sin were dealt with. And that enables me sometimes to extend mercy more now than when I was 20. So I just wanted to get some practical things.

And mercy is a really a, because we're going to get to a very, very important reciprocity principle. So, I just, I wanted to kind of pave the way with a little practical application. Does that make sense? Anyone have another set of mental gymnastics

you can go through that helps you to extend mercy? I've motivated most of the mercy in kind people in life situations.

I find it almost reflexive. Yeah, yeah. That's a good point that it's, it is easier to extend mercy to people who are like you, who are in similar life situations, because in that situation you experienced mercy and it had a great effect, and it kind of draws you to do the same thing.

Is that what you're saying? Yeah, and so, as a result, for instance, I run a philosophy club. The church gets scholarships every year, and some kids go to them and have them pay for part of my pay for it. Yeah.

And then when my church, different church leaders are like, you have no idea why you're doing this. Yeah. I'm thinking, well, that's just a mental experience.

Right, right. Yeah. I mean, mercy is about the hardest thing.

Well, loving your enemy is probably the hardest. And this is the form of loving your enemies. Because just everything inside us wants to retaliate, to assert our significance, our importance, our rightness.

Yeah, yeah. From what I've read from people who have been homeless and have come out of homelessness, they say the worst thing to do is to give them money.

But let me give you the other side of that. And it gets back to what you, I'm sorry, your name tags down. I don't know your name.

Jim. Also, there are too many J's in this room. Jim, John.

Okay. Jimmy James. I understand what you're saying, and I don't do it.

Every once in a while, my wife will jump out of the car and give them money. And I'll say, what are you doing? And she said I think I'm supposed to. And I said, well, I'm not going to disagree with your reading of the Spirit.

But here's the interesting thing. My son, who was a four-year-old student, dropped out of Biola with one semester left because he wanted to go to Australia and be the first professional American Aussie rules football player. It just was his dream.

He loves Aussie football. He's 6'4", 4% body fat, 210 pounds. He's scary.

And if he's going to hit you, you tend to get out of his way. All right. So, he would, I said, I said, Tyler, just finish your degree.

No, every year that passes, I'm a year older, I'm going to Australia. So, the kid got on the airplane with some potential promises of maybe someone pick him up at the airport with 800 bucks, I think it was, and flew to Australia. This is my son.

And he had a rough go at first. Hard time finding places to live. Couldn't find work right away.

Got a grotesque infection on his arms. We finally Skyped with him, and he showed us. And we said, will you please go to a doctor? And he said I don't need money.

I can't go to a doctor. I said I'll put 70 bucks in your bank account, go to a doctor. So we bailed him out on that.

But it was interesting. Tyler got down to absolutely nothing and was destitute. And sometimes when I see a homeless person, I said, that could be Tyler.

I don't know why they're homeless. Half of them are mentally ill, statistically. I don't know why they, why he's homeless.

And so, I think that's part of my thinking that, yeah, I know I'm not supposed to give him money, but if somebody saw my son in Australia playing his guitar, panhandling, trying to get enough money to eat dinner, I'd hope they'd give him some money. So, it's really interesting. I mean, I know you just can't give to everyone, but mercy isn't that concerned with the object.

If the person is truly in need, it calls for mercy of some sort. So, my daughter got a card from the local shelters and had things for McDonald's. And she's 25, doesn't have much money, but that's what she hands out.

So, we just have different ways of dealing with this in our family. But again, that was an interesting thing, because I watched my son go through a situation where he really needed mercy. I'm much more inclined to give mercy when I see someone in a similar situation.

Mercy is a hard thing, because if you give everything away, you're going to be on the street. Yes, it is. Ha, ha, ha.

Showing mercy is going to the church council every month. Either that or it's another thing that... No, I won't say. I hate meetings, but I know you have to have them.

Well, let me get to the really hard thing on mercy. And it's... Oh, by the way, I just made a note here. The greatest enemy of mercy is legalism.

Because in legalism, it substitutes love and mercy for the other person with being right. Well, he deserves it. He shouldn't have gone to Australia.

Why drop out of school once... He's a four-year-old, for goodness sakes. Finish your degree, be valedictorian, and then do something silly. You know, I mean, it's so often, especially men, stereotypically, are really good at this.

We think that being right is more important than showing love and showing mercy, right? Yeah. Yeah. Blessed are the merciful, and the blessing is, they will be shown mercy.

Again, the question is, when? When will they be shown mercy? They're shown mercy at conversion, Titus 3.5. Our conversion is an act of mercy. Daily, we are shown mercy. This is the power of Paul's salutations, 1 Timothy 1-2, grace, mercy, and peace.

And again, we haven't become deserving. We're still undeserving, but God empowers us daily by extending His grace and mercy to us. And at the judgment, we'll be shown mercy.

That's our final... Is that right? Yeah, it's the final act of mercy. I don't ever remember heaven being described with terms of mercy. But you know, Paul says of Onesiphorus, may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that day.

So again, it's who we are, what we are becoming, and what we will be. And by the way, I think Matt said in his prayer at lunch today, this threefold thing: We know this about salvation, right? We were saved, we are being saved, and we will be saved. Yeah, this is not a Calvinist-Armenian thing.

Paul talks about the different time dimensions of salvation. So same thing. Who we are, what we're becoming, what we ultimately will be.

I think the hardest thing, though, on this beatitude is the whole principle of reciprocity. Reciprocity. Reciprocity.

Why should I show someone mercy? Well, so I'll be shown mercy. And in fact, if I show mercy, then God has to show me mercy because, after all, God's a soda machine. Is soda or pop here? What do you say? Soda? Okay.

You have a soda machine, and I'm from the north, so I say pop, anyway. And I put my dollar in, and that soda machine owes me a Diet Coke, right? That's the principle, we use the Latin phrase, quid pro quo, right? That I'm going to give you something, and you must give me something in return. And when you first look at this, blessed are

the merciful, for they'll be shown mercy. It feels like quid pro quo, doesn't it? It's like, I'm going to do this so that God has to, and that's right, these are all divine passives.

So, I'm going to show people mercy, so God has to show me mercy because he's a soda machine. I put in my dollar of mercy, I get my soda of mercy back. It's silly to extend the metaphor, but, obviously, that can't be what it's saying, right? But again, this is one of those passages where just because it doesn't mean quid pro quo doesn't mean we throw it out.

What is the relationship between me showing mercy and me being shown mercy? And we're going to hit this several more times. We're going to hit it with the forgiveness in six. Well, yeah, we're going to hit it in six, and we're going to hit it in seven on, oh, judge not lest you be judged.

The measure you use will be the measure that's used against you. So, this reciprocity principle will come up two other times. I'm sorry, Jimmy James.

Do you qualify that with grace or with one mercy? I never thought of them in those terms. Grace? I don't know if I would think that in those terms. We'll get there on Wednesday.

All right. So, here's what I think the beatitude is saying. If I have been changed by God's mercy, I will, of necessity, extend mercy.

You know, one of the joys of preaching, is it's not the case, is that you develop ways of saying things. You know, you go to seminary, and you learn your theology, and you know how Calvin or Wesley says it, but you want to find a way to say it that really is your way of saying it. And that's part of the fun, I think, of preaching, is that you develop these ways of speaking.

And then it's really cool when you start hearing your people using those phrases, right? And the phrase that I developed—let me get this one right—is that change people live to change lives. That's my doctrine of the necessity of perseverance. Perseverance isn't a new task to do.

It's that if you were truly changed, in other words, if you truly became a Christian, God took out your heart of stone, gave you a heart of flesh that's soft and malleable and shapeable and under the influence of the Spirit, and you're fundamentally changed, and you have no option but to have your life change. Because it's supernatural in a sense, but in another sense, it's the most natural thing that can happen. Because you're different, and so you start to behave differently.

That's where persecution comes from, that our friends go down the broad road, we go down the narrow path, and because we are changed, when we go through that

gate, we start becoming different. This is 1 Peter 3, or 4, or wherever it is. And they don't understand why we're different.

And they take it as judgment, and so they start harassing us, okay? Change people live change lives. So, I was extended mercy at my conversion, and that fundamentally changed me. And one of the supernatural but natural outgrowths of that is that I start to extend mercy to others.

Why? Because I was shown mercy. And it's part of my makeup of who I am, as imperfect as that may be, and so it's just this natural outflowing of a changed heart where there was no mercy, I start treating people imperfectly with mercy. That's what I think is going on.

That's what the doctrine of reciprocity is all about, is that if we have experienced mercy, we are going to be shown mercy. Not quid pro quo, but that's what happens when we are changed. Here's the terrifying part of the principle, and again it's going to get really scary in the forgiveness.

And that is, if someone refuses to show mercy, is it possible they were ever shown mercy by God? If the reciprocity principle is true, if we're changed at the gate, we are shown mercy such that it changes us, and we start to show mercy. If a person never, if a person steadfastly over, I'm not talking about an event here, an event there, I'm saying if a person adopts a lifestyle of refusing to show mercy, could they ever have been shown mercy in the first place? In other words, are they really a Christian? And I think that's the struggle of this beatitude because the ideas of being shown mercy at conversion, and our lives of mercy giving, and God's ultimate statement of mercy, honesty, and judgment, they're all tied together. Yeah, that's the Matthew. Is it 18, y'all? 18.

It's a parable of a merciful servant. Let me read the main verse on that so that we can have it. Yeah, it's Matthew 18, starting in verse 32.

Then the master called the servant, and you wicked servant, he said, I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had on you? The master was assuming, incorrectly in this case, but he was assuming that having experienced mercy would change you into a mercy giver yourself. In anger, the master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he should pay back all that he owed.

This is how your heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from the heart. Really? I thought I was saved by faith. I thought I've passed from judgment into life.

Well, context, context, context, right? This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you, unless you forgive your brother or sister from the heart. So, what we're going to say when we get to the forgiveness issue, is that people that have truly experienced forgiveness become forgiving people. Not perfectly, not all at once, but people who have been forgiven or changed, and therefore, they will start forgiving where they had not forgiven before.

And eventually, as I'll say tomorrow, is that if people refuse to forgive over an extended period of time, and I, you know, I know there's issues of abuse and deep pain, and I want to be careful, but there's something about being forgiven that changes you into a forgiving person, however imperfectly—same thing with mercy. I saw him, yeah.

There's also the other dynamic that we run into for very frequently, I think, is that people refuse to forgive. They refuse to forgive their sin. Not that they refuse to forgive it, but they refuse to see it.

Eventually, they become so hard that they become dispensable. Yeah. Right.

Yeah, Mark's bringing up the point that there are some people who won't give, but there are also some people who won't receive mercy. And I've not run into many of those. I mean, I've heard this, but why won't people receive mercy? They want to be, right? Is it an arrogance and pride thing? Yeah.

Yeah, a lot of the kids learn it. Yeah. Yeah, there are some people who think their sin has put them outside the scope of God's ability to forgive.

Yeah, I understand that. And it's usually really bad sins or repetitive sins. How can God love me? How can God forgive this again? And I could see that being a real issue.

Yeah. Yeah. Jim? The other Jim? The other Jim.

Yeah. Yeah. Right.

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah, because the way I phrased the question was actually meant to raise that question in your mind: is that of salvation? And let me say before I forget, I'm not a judge.

I've read the job description of the guy who does the judging, and I can't do it because that's God's job. And I'm not a fruit inspector. That's not my calling.

In fact, you'll hear my position on Matthew 7:1 is pretty strong about judging, about not doing it. I tend to go more to the area of assurance, and that in talking to people in the church, if they refuse to show mercy, if they refuse to offer forgiveness, if

they're comfortable with ongoing sin in their life, the furthest I would ever go is say, you know, when you were changed at the gate, this was what was supposed to follow. I say, are you really confident that you went through the gate? Now, this is your decision.

It's not mine. I'm not judging. But I'm saying, you know, one of the primary—there are three tests for assurance in 1 John, and one of them is to change life.

And does it bother you that you are comfortable not showing mercy? Does it bother you that you are perfectly comfortable in your attitudes? And I wouldn't go further with people than that. Right, right. And so, to get back to your point, how you enter the kingdom is how you live in the kingdom.

They're the same thing. And so, if entering the kingdom is a reign and rule of God in your life, then he needs to continue to reign and rule imperfectly in cycles, getting better, all this kind of good Wesley stuff. Did you like that, Bob? Good Wesley stuff.

Yeah, if you refuse—yeah, there is so much pain in this world that I would want to be careful at saying why people respond the way they do. I'm going to speak in a conference in Houston in two weeks, and they've been sending me the sample questions. 250 women leaders.

And the questions are—here's one I got. My husband is sexually molesting our daughter. I went to the elders of the church.

They said it was my fault and I needed to go submit it. Okay, so when I say there's a lot of pain in this world—I mean, you guys know. You guys are in the trenches.

You see this kind of stuff. And so, why is a person not being merciful? Part of my answer is that you just have to listen. So, tell me your story.

Tell me how did you feel when the elders said it was your fault, that you weren't submissive enough or you weren't pretty enough or whatever. And getting people to—and a lot of people just want to be heard. And that's the great big step towards healing is to know you're not alone in your pain, but you're being heard.

So why are people unable to—I mean, I know of a lady who had an abortion years and years ago when it wasn't the way it is now. Her whole life is riddled with guilt and pain because she can't forgive herself because of what she did. And so, you listen, you talk, you get confession, you bring the light of the truth, and you bring it to light.

And then, you know, once you've done that, then you can start saying, okay, let's talk about forgiveness. But it is hard. But if God is ruling and reigning in your heart as you live in the kingdom, then these kinds of things come under His lordship.

And His lordship says, I showed you mercy. I changed you. You need to be showing mercy.

If you're not, you have an issue that you need to deal with. But a good point, good point. Let me just check my notes here.

If I am not able or not willing to extend mercy, then I must ask myself if I have truly experienced God's mercy. This is not a warning for those who struggle with extending mercy, but for those who have no desire to extend mercy and are okay. Okay, so these are not people involved in the struggle of it all.

There is a connection between God showing mercy to me and me showing mercy to others. James 2:13, for judgment, is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Stott says, page 47, we cannot claim to have repented of our sins if we are unmerciful towards the sins of others.

That's a really good way to say it, I think. We cannot claim to have repented of our sins if we are unmerciful towards the sins of others. You know, part of me, on some of the irregular people in my life, and thankfully, I don't have a whole lot, but I want to say, if you do not love your brother, who you can see, how can you love God who you can't see? And the obvious answer in 1 John is, you can't.

If you can't, in ever-increasing, ever-imperfect ways, love a brother or sister, you can't love God because loving God fundamentally changes us. That's the only way I know to handle the Beatitudes, and this whole issue of reciprocity. And it's hard, it's hard to preach because you really have to spend some time struggling with it.

But this is how I've handled these things. Yeah, and yet God has given the church teachers, and I know what you're saying though. What I had to do, actually what made me think through this was have a few people hate me so deeply.

And I had to decide how to treat them. Because if they're Christians, I'm going to treat them one way. I'm going to be much more aggressive.

I'm going to be much more in their face—frankly, much more of a Bible-thumper. Say, you know, I've gone to you three times.

I've asked for your forgiveness. I've asked you to tell me how I hurt you. You will not tell me.

You've got an issue in your life that you need to deal with. I mean, if they're a believer, I'm a little more comfortable doing something like that. If they're not a believer, none of that applies.

And I had to decide, literally based on the theology that started with me struggling with this beatitude, I don't know whether they're a Christian or not. I have to assume they're not. And I have to treat them as if they weren't a Christian.

That totally changes how I relate to that person. And frankly, it makes it so much easier to extend mercy. Because if they're not a Christian, they don't have the Spirit.

They're not regenerate. They haven't been forgiven. And well, of course, they're going to hate me.

They're children of the darkness. And so that actually is a little bit of the story behind why I... And again, I'm not the judge. I'm not passing judgment.

I just had to decide how I was going to relate to these people. I just decided that I cannot assume that they're believers. Therefore, I'm going to take a safe route and treat them as I would any non-believer. And that is not going to pump them with the Bible, that's for sure.

My decision. All right. Well, I'm going to let you percolate on that.

And then we get to the forgiveness after the Lord's Prayer. It's all going to come back up again. And we'll see how you've been percolating.

Okay. Beatitude number six, verse eight. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

The basic meaning of pure is unsoiled, untainted, and spotless. Some people think in terms of undiluted. It's pure.

That our heart is purely devoted to God. It's not divided. Some of it's not for God, and other parts of it are for sin.

Okay, so it's not diluted. It's pure. It's wholly committed to Him.

Uh-huh. Cathartic. Yeah, yeah.

The Greek word is katharoi. So, if you get cathartic and those kinds of words. I'm looking up a verse in the Old Testament.

I'm not texting. Don't worry. Where's my Bible? There it is.

Uh, Psalm 24, verses three to five. Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in His holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. They will receive blessing from the Lord and vindication from God, their Savior.

All right, it's a great Old Testament passage for purity. Just like pure gold is undiluted, it's not mixed with other elements, the pure heart is not mixed with moral and spiritual filth. So the pure in heart person is single-minded in devotion, undivided in loyalty, fully devoted to God, not hypocritical at all.

Aren't you glad that life is a journey and that we are slowly moving towards purity? But it's purity in heart. So of course, the emphasis is not on how we behave on the outside. Primarily, it's who we are on the inside.

Oh, Psalm 86:11. Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name.

Another good Old Testament parallel. See, the Pharisees in all modern versions, right? I don't like the word religious people. I don't like the phrase churchmen.

I just have all kinds of baggage around those words. I know they're not inherently wrong, but the Pharisees and all religious people say, you know, blessed are the outwardly clean, right? These are the people who put on the show and do it for the praise of men. And what really matters is the washing of cups, the tithing of spices, how many steps you take on Saturday.

And this is Pharisaism, right? And these are people that are focused on external religious acts. And they think, and this is the essence of legalism, they think that by doing certain things, they curry favor with God, right? We all know these people in our lives, right? They make a show. They let you know whenever they give you a lot of money.

They're there when the church doors are open. I mean, you can fill in the blanks. But I wouldn't call it endemic because it's probably always been true, is that the church visible has always had a contingent of people that all the emphasis was on the externals and what they did.

And Jesus is blessing them in all that chapter six, he's going to say, all they get is the praise of man, nothing else. You know, they don't get anything from God, but rather the blessing is on the purity of the heart. I headed again as an interesting discussion about China discussion at lunch.

And because of the history with Mao and the chaos that followed his taking power, and all the stuff that happened, stereotypically, one of the real challenges in the Chinese church is to talk about being and not doing. Because they don't really have a concept of being, they just do. Okay, that's what Mao beat into him.

You know, he would separate husbands and wives, send one to work in Shanghai and the other one in Beijing. If everything is in chaos, there can't be a revolt. So, he worked hard to create chaos and separate families.

And so, here's a very typical situation. Husband and wife don't know how to relate to each other. Because life is what you do, not who you are.

So, the husband gets frustrated and goes off to work. The wife gets frustrated and so tries to control the child. Highly manipulative.

The child goes, I'm thinking of one guy in particular, goes to the States, becomes a Christian, comes back, and he needs to honor his mother and father. But it's impossible to be a Christian with all this controlling, dominating kind of influence on them. And I heard that story over and over and over again.

You try to speak into that situation about issues of character and who we are in Christ—not what we do, but who we are. And it's like they don't have a paradigm to understand that. Many of them don't have a paradigm.

It's like we tell our: when Robin and I go, Robin always goes with me because the fact that I respect my wife enough to bring her speaks louder than anything I say. Like one gal said to my wife, said, your husband seems to really respect you. So I'd asked her some questions when I was teaching.

She goes, yeah, he really does. He goes, well, what's he like in private? It didn't even occur to her that I would be the same and that I would respect her in private. Again, this is just part of the challenge of the church over there.

Now, where am I going in this? So, love is defined by obedience. If you ask, again, a stereotypical Chinese Christian, what's love? It's obedience. Well, I do what God tells me to do.

So, we got to the point of loving our enemies. And I said, what's love? And I knew very well what their instinctual answer was going to be. I said, well, he can't be calling on us to obey our enemies, right? Oh yeah.

So, what's love? And I use that to jump off and talk about love and joyfully putting the needs of the person ahead of your own. And I'm saying this, why am I saying this? Because it's so hard for so many of them to think in terms of the purity of their

heart because everything is about what you do. Now, when I say that and describe it, my most recent example of that is in the Chinese church.

I go; it's not really that far from our churches, is it? That's about what you do. What you do defines who you are in our culture. Yeah.

I wonder how we could change how we ask questions. You know, you get to know someone and it's real natural. How do you like the weather? So, what do you do? I wonder if we could change it saying, do you love Jesus? I wonder what it would look like if we just went to the being instead of the doing stage right away.

I don't know. I don't know. What I'm just saying is the purity that receives the blessing is purity in heart.

And that's really hard for a lot of people, I think in probably all cultures to hear, because we get our sense of significance, especially men, from what we do, what we've been able to accomplish. And so, we're all about what we do rather than who we are. This is part of my journey.

I just, what do I do? I mean, my struggle is to spend time with the Lord every morning. It's just, I'm 62 years old and I still have as big a struggle on many mornings as I did when I was 20. It's like, I haven't learned this lesson.

And because I'm all geared to do, I say, God, I don't really have time to read, to read, read you and talk and to talk about, because I need to write another book about you. And I got to finish this chapter on the aorist participle, you know? And it's kind of like, and it's, for me, it's just do, do, do. My major journey in life is to learn what it is to abide in Christ.

Just to patiently sit down and enjoy the relationship and to convince myself that God doesn't need me to do anything. I can, I can die right now and he could raise up someone to finish my next book. Nobody would probably know the difference.

God doesn't need me. He doesn't need you. He wants you.

He wants me. In the same way that my wife primarily doesn't want me to do things for her, she wants me to be with her. So, we spend, and I'm really fortunate.

I get to work at home and have virtually no schedule. So, we usually spend two hours in the morning coffee. We drink a lot of coffee.

We talk, we share what's going on. In the evening, we normally stop working at about five and sit on the porch and get something to drink. Robin's favorite is chips and guacamole, so I have chips and guacamole for dinner every other day.

And we'd sit there. Our nickname in the neighborhood is the porch people because we're always out on the porch, and we bought a house on the side of the street so that we could sit on the porch and talk to people. And it was, it was all an intentional thing.

And that's me; that's Robin trying to help me learn to be and not to do. Okay. So I'm really off the topic here, but this is purity of heart.

This is on the innermost recess. It's not what we do. It's who we are.

And our blessing is on those that are undivided in their heart. The heart's not soiled with moral filth, and the blessing is being pronounced on them. Yes, sir.

Oh, yeah. Actually. Yeah.

If, I want to see God and the act of seeing God is an empowering act. Yeah. You know, we, we have a series of seminars on biblical training and the idea behind them is what every elder needs to know about blank.

And we're trying to fill in those holes. So, we just, ADF, came and did what every elder needs to know about the church and the law. But the next one we're going to shoot is pornography.

And I finally found a counselor that's, I think, right for it. And we invited him over. And one of his counselees was there as well, because I wanted to see how they interacted.

And it was powerful to see how painful and how imprisoning pornography is. And the freedom, because I know the counselee pretty well, the freedom that comes from, from getting out of that. But when I was all over, I told Robin, I said, I think I need to get a fire hose and wash the house down.

It was, it was so painful to hear what had imprisoned my friend. So, we're going to shoot the seminar, pray over the house, shoot the seminar, and then hose it down. But you know, that should be our response, frankly, when I, if I can find someone that knows how to deal with gossip in the church.

Because if there's nothing more destructive to the church than gossip, that's, I call it the native language of the church. That's just what the church does. It berates and belittles one another instead of loving.

So, I say that because I, you know, for me, pornography is not the ultimate sin. Gossip is. But sins in good standing.

Yes, yes. I'm going to use that phrase when we get to seven-one. So yeah, that's good.

That's a neat story. Yeah, there is something that's enticing about the Beatitudes, aren't they? There's something that, that draws it to part of it. It's like, well, I can't do that.

That's too hard. But on the other hand is I really would like to see God in ever clear ways. And if my divided heart is blurring my vision of God, then I just want to see him more and more and clearer and clearer.

And that becomes a motivation, a motivation for purifying the heart. Yeah, thanks. We got the same, same problem here, y'all though.

It said, blessed are the pure in heart for they and they alone will see God. The only, the only people, if I can use travel journey language, the only people are going to see God are those who are on the journey toward purity. And that's not exactly what the word says, but I think we have to do that.

If you're not pure in heart, if at least you're not on the journey towards purity of heart, you're not a disciple of Jesus. I don't know how else to read Beatitudes. I really don't.

The disciples can see him now in the sense that they can perceive him to know him, but it's nothing compared to what it's going to be when we actually do get to see him. What I tell people is that I have tried to identify unique events in the Bible. There are certain things that are going to be repeated, right? For all eternity, first Corinthians 13, I'm going to be able to continue to express faith, hope, and love.

There's nothing that's ongoing stuff, right? But there are certain events that are in all of eternity that are only going to happen once. And I look forward to those events. I'm a real wussy when it comes to pain.

I have no pain threshold. My wife never hurts. So, she fell the other day and got three staples in the back of her head.

She never said it really hurt. Okay. That's just my wife, but everything hurts.

But I've told her, I said, given if this comes up when I'm dying, don't give me morphine. Now I'll be screaming for morphine at the top of my lungs, but I, I want to go into heaven with my mind alert because it's, I only get to do it once. And I only get to see Jesus once for the first time.

And I don't want it clouded with drugs. Now, obviously, maybe if I were on morphine, it's all going to be removed. I don't know.

Well, yeah, I want to walk into heaven with my eyes open and see Jesus coming. It's just, for some reason, really important to me. That's why these verses, like 1 John 3:2, are so important to me.

Beloved, we are God's children because there's the already, and what we will be, not yet, has not yet appeared. But we know that when he appears, we will be like him because we shall see him as he is. So, there's going to be something transformative happening when you and I see Jesus for the first time.

Um, you know, one of my questions, I don't know if you have thought about that. When is the sinful nature removed? Is it when we die or when we add judgment? The Bible doesn't, doesn't actually ever say. Have you ever thought about it? I'm curious. Have you ever thought through that? In other words, in the intermediate state, when we're spirits without bodies, are we going to have a sinful nature or not? Yeah, I hope not.

Do you know what you are going to do during the intermediate stage? Don't act on a body. And I don't like that because if I understand what a spirit is, I'm not going to be able to touch my wife, which I'm a real, I like to touch. Um, and I'm not going to be able to.

So that kind of freaks me out. It kind of freaked Paul out, too, right? 2 Corinthians 5. He did not want to be a body without the tent, a spirit without the tent. But my guess is we'll spend a lot of time apologizing.

I think that's a lot of what's going to go on in the intermediate state. Um, finding people that we hurt or who hurt us and working through it. Um, but I think there'll be a lot of apologizing.

I think Americans, oh, Africa, just this gargantuan apology. You know, the American church has enough money to feed the poor of the world. We talk about 40,000 children starving a day, but if the American church would put its money where it should, those children would be fed.

That's the other side of that particular coin. So, I think we'll be apologizing for stuff. Where on earth am I going? Oh yeah.

But I want to know whether my propensity to retaliate and be anger, if that's going to be affecting me during the intermediate state. I don't know. I can say, I think about this stuff a lot as I get older.

I am hoping, based on this verse, that when I die and I move into the intermediate state when I see Jesus, this change that he's talking about will be the removal of my sinful nature. And that means that my heart will finally, for the first time ever, be totally pure. I hope that happens at my death.

I don't know. Bible doesn't say, but I hope it happens at death. When we see him, see him as he is, full vision, it'll change us and we will be like him.

Now, the downside, and I have to keep pointing these things out, is blessed are the pure in heart, for they and they alone will see God that without, however, you want to describe it, being on the road toward purity, they will not see God. And my mind goes to the verses about holiness at this point. Like holiness, Hebrews 12, 14.

Strive for holiness, without which no one will see God. Sounds kind of Wesleyan. Strive for holiness.

This isn't what we are in conversion because you don't strive for that. This is experiential. This is life.

This is growth. This is discipleship. This is sanctification.

We are to strive for holiness, and without it, no one will see God. Strive for purity of heart; otherwise, you will not see God. We were made holy at conversion, and yet in our experience, apparently, we are to strive for purity, strive for holiness.

Not earning salvation, but changed people have changed lives. It is the struggle, it's the reverse of the beatitudes that are the greatest struggle, I think, to come to terms with. And it, I think, really gets at who is a Christian.

I think the fact that the Calvinist-Arminian debate can't get settled, and be honest, it can't get settled, right? This is, I mean, Southern Baptist, the denomination is just radically split on this issue. I know in the seminaries, it's really a hot, it still is a very hot topic. And whenever I see a question that can't be answered, I have to assume that the wrong question is being asked.

And I think the wrong question is, what's a Christian? I can't get too far into this, but, you know, Jesus said, did Jesus say, believe this, do that? No. So Jesus said, follow me. Hmm.

So, I wonder what that means. Who is a disciple of Christ? Well, one who follows Him. I know, if you believe in your heart that Christ raised Him from the dead, if you confess Him raised from the dead, you know, Romans 10.

Yeah, I know those verses, but I'm still, I struggle with the language of the Gospels, and I want to understand them as Jesus intended them to be understood. And again, blessed are the pure in heart, for they are the ones that will see God. Got to deal with that one.

Anyway, I think I beat that dead horse enough. One more. No, actually, two more.

Oh yeah, these are the easy ones, peacemakers and persecutions. Um, let me, let me see if I can get through the Beatitudes, and we'll take a break. Beatitude number 7 is in verse 9, blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called, and here's, your translations are going to differ, it's the Greek word sons.

NIV has children of God. Yours may say sons of God or sons and daughters of God. I'm not sure.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. This is not pronouncing a blessing on people who have a certain natural disposition, people who think that they should have peace at all costs, or people who don't have the courage to deal with issues that need to be dealt with. And I don't think Stott's right on this.

I don't think this is primarily about world peace. It certainly has ramifications at the global level, but I don't think that's what it's primarily discussing. Who's a peacemaker? There are three parts to my definition.

First of all, a peacemaker is someone who's at peace with God, all right? This is Romans 5. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we are at peace with God. So, peacemakers, first and foremost, are people who experience peace in their relationship with God, but the wall of sin has been torn down, and they're reconciled to God. Okay, that's easy.

Secondly, a peacemaker is someone who has an inward disposition of peace. It is what God has turned their temperament into. I'm not much for using Hebrew words, but this is what shalom is all about, right? Shalom is not just the cessation of hostilities.

The Hebrew Old Testament concept of peace is the whole peace of the inner life, the calmness of what's inside, harmony, and wholeness. Your inner life is not characterized by strife, discord, and anger, all right? So, a peacemaker, second of all, has an inward disposition of peace. But then, thirdly, a peacemaker has the outward actions of actually making peace. A peacemaker is someone who actively works for peace.

And this is where it gets hard, isn't it? So, a peacemaker is going to, first and foremost, work at reconciliation. And I would say work at reconciliation in the body of Christ. This is where peacemaking starts.

Brothers and sisters together working to reconcile the problems. I had a friend who was a pastor, and he told me this story that he went to a new church, and it was just full of discord. Just, it was terrible.

And he got beat up, and they were beating up on each other, and they finally brought in the... Do you know about peacemakers, the organization? Very important. If you don't, okay. They called them peacemakers.

They did the whole thing, and it was a great story of success. They established what the issues were, what the solutions were. They had the meetings and all this stuff that peacemakers does.

And the church came to peace. It was very interesting. The Sunday after the peacemakers left, my friend was getting ready to preach, and one of the main malcontents jumped up on his side of the church.

And he said... It always makes me cry to think of this story, partly because I would love to see it in some of my own relationships. He jumped up right before the sermon started, and he said, I have something to say. My friend goes, oh, shoot.

Are you serious? We just solved this problem. He said, okay. And he turned to a man sitting on the other side of the church, and he said... We'll call him Jim.

I don't know his name. He said, Jim, I have something to say to you. Pastor friend's doing this at this point.

This is John, by the way. The man over here said, "I have hated you for 24 years, and I'm sorry."

Will you forgive me? Isn't that cool? That's peacemaking. It starts with reconciling broken relationships within the body of Christ. Now, yes, it expands outwards, and communities start to reconcile.

I've got a friend, it's a little crazy. The Lord tells him to do a lot of things, and he does what he's told. And the Lord told him to move, didn't tell him where to move.

He said, get in your U-Haul and go east. And my friend said, where am I going? The Lord said to him, I'll tell you when you need to know. Okay.

They sold their house and packed everything in the U-Haul. The wife goes, okay, I'm used to this by now. And they headed east, and partway there, the Lord said, you're going to go to this town.

He said, why? You'll find out when you get there. It turns out it was an enclave of racial hatred that was so bad that the pastors hated each other; the churches hated each other. They would do nothing together.

My friend is really good at reconciliation. So, for five years, he lived in this community and worked with the pastors. They're now all best friends.

They love each other. They pray together. Their churches do all these functions together.

That's why the Lord took him to this crazy little town. So, peacemaking isn't just reconciling broken relationships in the church. It extends to communities and, ultimately, the world.

I'll just say real briefly, I had to decide either my friend is psychotic or God does talk to him on a regular basis. And I decided that that's his gift. The Lord does speak to him on an almost daily basis with very direct instructions.

Very direct. Assemblies, you love this kind of stuff, right? He tells him where to go, the names of people he's going to meet, and what time he needs to be at the intersection to stop the person from killing herself. I mean, it's just, and he's been doing this for 20 years.

He gets up every morning and prays for two hours, reads his Bible, and listens. If the Lord doesn't say anything, he just goes about his normal work, whatever that is. And the Lord tells him to do it, and he does it.

I asked him once, I said, why doesn't the Lord do that more often? And he said because you have to be obedient if he's going to talk to you. If you're not going to be obedient, he's not going to tell you what to do anyway. It's ironic, isn't it, that making peace is rarely a peaceful activity? Do you ever think about that? One of the commentaries said this.

It's ironic that the process of making peace is rarely a peaceful activity. That if you need to come at peace in your heart, you have to aggressively attack the anger in your heart, or the malice, or the resentments, or those things that can take hold of our lives. I mean, you've got to stick a knife in there and rip it out, don't you? If you peacefully go at your heart, you're never going to accomplish anything.

When making peace with others, it's rarely a peaceful experience. I'm not a good confronter. I want people to like me, and so I have this really, really hard time confronting people, because then they won't like me.

So, when I do confront someone, the two times I've done it in my life, it's painful because it's so contrary to my personality. But making peace is not a peaceful activity, right? It's not a peaceful activity. But those who are peacemakers will be called sons of God, not sons in the sense of male.

It's inheritance language. That means they'll be fully members of the family of God, and the emphasis on is, this is how we start to look like God. This is how we start to look like Jesus.

We're his children. We're his sons and his daughters, and that means we start taking on his appearance, right? And he's the peacemaker, and we do too. One of my children's adopted.

I always forget which one it is. People are, when they were younger, were always guessing, well, which one's adopted? I'd say, I don't know. I forget.

Who do you think's adopted? Do you know that to date, they've never picked the adopted child? Ever. They usually pick my daughter. She's not adopted, which is weird because if you see her, she's a clone of her mother.

She and Robin look exactly alike. She's my personality, but she looks exactly like... How could you pick Kirsten as being the adopted? Drives her nuts. But the one that's adopted, no one's guess.

Do you know why? Looks just like me. Just like me. He has my... He thinks like me.

He acts like me. He looks like me. He's my son.

I'm his father. That's why I love adoption language in the Bible so much. I think it's the greatest doctrine there is.

We're all adopted. We used to tell him this when he was little. We're all adopted into God's family.

None of us are naturally born. You happen to also be adopted into our family biologically. You know, it's a Hebrew expression.

If you're really rich, you call him a son of wealth. So, to say that we are going to be like our father, we are called sons of our father. It happens at conversion.

We're adopted as a child, Ephesians 1:5. In life, we become like our father, this verse, and at the judgment, he'll take us home, and we'll be able to live with our dad. Of course, you can't just decide to be a peacemaker, right? Tell your church you need to make peace. That doesn't work.

It starts at the golden chain's beginning, doesn't it? Because you're never going to make peace if you're arrogant and prideful if you're not meek if you think that you deserve something if you think that you're slicker and... What's the expression? Slicker than... You think you're slicker and... Slicker than... But really you're a cold booger on a paper plate. That's the second half of the expression. You think you're slicker and snot, but really you're a cold booger on a paper plate.

Anyway, I don't know why I'm saying that. See, I shouldn't have said it, Bob. I'm sorry.

You've got to start with the spiritual depravity. And as you go through the process of learning and growing, you'll want to become like dad. You'll want to look like him.

And that means you'll want to make peace. I hope that's not on the video. Yeah, it's just... Peacemaking is really hard, isn't it? It's so much easier to be like me and just pretend it doesn't exist and go away, which, of course, only makes the problems worse.

And as a pastor, you can't do that. I mean, this was the hardest thing when I was pastoring. No, the gossip was the hardest.

The second hardest was when I knew I needed to confront it. It was so hard, but peacemaking is hard work.

I had one staff member come in and say, I hate that staff member. He hates me. We refuse to work together.

So you have to choose. Well, in retrospect, I should have fired both of them. I tried to make peace, and it didn't work, but that's another story.

Yeah, well, I was. Yeah. Yeah.

How did I deal with church discipline? I had to do it corporately. I would be willing for people to start the Matthew 18 grievance process by seeing me individually. It was really hard.

And the whole time I would just... I had to listen. I didn't offer advice. I just said, you need to know that I've heard your story.

And sometimes that helped. When it got to the point where there was a conflict that had to be solved, I usually went to the elders and I said, I need one of you or two of you to come with me because I can't do this on my own. Yeah.

And so, yeah, that's biblical. But it was. I just didn't; my skin is so thin. I don't have it in me to sit down and to confront you.

For example, I have to have other people with me. So that was my, that's how I did it. Fortunately, I didn't have to do it a whole lot.

But some... Yeah. Well, it's uncomfortable. And frankly, when I wrote my position paper on church discipline, the problem is if you have a church that's over 20 people, church discipline never works.

I remember going into a church that had a reputation of liking to do church discipline, and we happened to be doing church discipline that day. And they told us about a gal that wasn't repenting of her adultery, and that was told that we couldn't talk to her. Well, part of me says, yeah, okay, what's the husband? What's his culpability? Women just don't pick up and go have adultery and commit adultery.

But the real problem was I didn't know her. And all they did was slam her. I'm not in a position to help or, I mean, it's just church discipline, isn't it? it is really, really hard.

And it's hard. Not only is it just hard, but the biblical, the first century church, nothing was over house. There was not a building for a church until Constantine.

And the church quintupled every decade. It's how much the church needs big buildings. But if you get out of the house church model, it's almost impossible.

Discipline them so the rest stand in fear, right? 1 Timothy 4:5, 1 Timothy 5. If I don't know you, you're not going to stand in fear. Anyway, anyway. Let's take a break.

We'll come back and do the persecuted and the salt and light.