

The Keys to blessings - Love and the Beatitudes

Prayer*

First off, how many of us want to know God?

1 John 4:7-8 New International Version (NIV)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Okay so we need Love. So what is Love? Well there are 4 types of love that are exemplified in the Bible:

Agape - Agape is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love, the highest of the four types of love in the Bible. This Greek word and variations of it are found throughout the New Testament.

Eros - Eros is the physical, sensual love between a husband and wife. Although this Greek term does not appear in the Bible, eros, or erotic love, is portrayed in the Old Testament book, *The Song of Solomon*. God is very clear in his Word. Sex outside of marriage is forbidden. Within marriage, sex is used for emotional and spiritual bonding and for reproduction. Sex outside of marriage can create soul ties and strongholds.

Philia - means close friendship or brotherly love in Greek. Philia and other forms of this Greek noun are found throughout the New Testament. Christians are frequently exhorted to love their fellow Christians.

Storge - is family love, the bond among mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers. As with eros, this Greek term does not appear in the Bible. However, many examples of family love are found in Scripture, such as the love and mutual protection among Noah and his wife, their sons and daughters-in-law in Genesis; the love of Jacob for his sons; and the strong love the sisters Martha and Mary in the gospels had for their brother Lazarus.

For our purposes I want to discuss the highest form of Love Agape. This is the type of Love talked about in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 New International Version (NIV)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

So if we love each other the way God intends us to; we are called to be:

- Patient

- Kind
 - Truthful
 - Protective
 - Trusting
 - Forgiving
 - Hopeful
 - Perseverant
- And Not:
- Envious
 - Boastful
 - Prideful
 - Selfish
 - Hostile

By pursuing the positive aspects of this scripture and avoiding the negative we exemplify Agape love. Remember what that meant? Agape is selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love. When we work out our faith by instilling these traits into our dealings with others, we show Christ in each of us. Remember, God IS Love.

The next aspect is that when we walk in the way that God wants us to walk we will be blessed. How many here today want to experience all the blessings that Jesus has in store for them? He has given us a group of Be-attitudes from his sermon on the Mount.

What does the term beatitude mean? It means: Supreme blessedness or happiness. I could go for some of that, how about you?

Let's look now at Matthew 5:3-10

Matthew 5:3-10 New International Version (NIV)

³ *"Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

⁴ *Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.*

⁵ *Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.*

⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.*

⁷ *Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.*

⁸ *Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.*

⁹ *Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.*

¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*

- 1) Poor (meek) in Spirit – To be literal in our translation of this we need to look at the Aramaic word “anya” and the Hebrew word “ani”. This word means bent down, afflicted, miserable and poor. The alternate of poor in translation is meek. In this context meek is a synonym from the same Hebrew root. The word is “anwan” which means bending oneself down, being humble and gentle. What this scripture is not saying is that a person must be economically devastated. It is saying that the person must relate to the painful condition experienced by the poor. God does not require poverty to bless his people. This blessing is given because a Christian chooses, like their saviour not to distance themselves from the suffering of others. To be blessed does not require poverty, but a willingness to suffer the humble estate should it be required.
- 2) Those who are poor in spirit are similar to the meek as described; however, those who humbly and meekly bend themselves before God shall inherit the land and possess it in peace. See Ps. 36:11 While this scripture refers to the promised land of Israel, it is a typology of the messianic kingdom of Jesus.
- 3) The third beatitude “Mourning” from the Greek “pentheo” meaning to grieve, wail, lament. This relates to the willingness to humbly bend before God and lean upon him. It can also mean the sharing of the suffering of another and bringing Christ like comfort to those around you who are suffering. We mourn with those who mourn. Christ injects himself into the situation and brings comfort to those who need him. When we share another’s suffering we bring significance to their feelings. We exemplify that Christ loves them during their sorrow. We show that he does not distance himself from them by our actions. Can you see a pattern here in the beatitudes? Can you see how the aspects of Agape Love are the characteristics that must be exemplified to make a difference?
- 4) Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness is simply a strong desire and an ongoing desire to see the progress of Sanctification in our lives regardless of the personal cost to us. We grow towards holiness. While we are justified and Christ covers us in his robes of righteousness, we still have areas of our flesh that need work. Just a note here, there is no spiritual gift of criticism.
- 5) This beatitude speaks of mercy. This comes from the Greek “eleeo” meaning to be compassionate by word or deed, specifically in divine grace. As we exercise mercy both from an action perspective and also in response to a spiritual need, we fulfill one of the primary roles of the church. When it is exercised we receive it.
- 6) The terminology “Cleanness of Heart” seems on the surface to be somewhat ambiguous. It is not referring only to chastity or purity of conscience. God looks at the intentions of our heart. As we study out this beatitude we see that it is our intentions that are called into play here. It is what Matthew 6:22 refers to as the eye. What is our intention? One example is pornography. When a person looks at porn they have already sinned. The intention to lust is sin.

Matthew 6:22 Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB)

“The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light.

Matthew 5:28

New International Version (NIV)

But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart

- 7) Peacemakers from the Greek “eirenopoios” refers to one who is a pacificator or a person who is pacificatory. These are those individuals who live at peace with others but even more importantly do their best to bring about peace and friendship in potentially volatile situations. These people are doing the work of intercession and restoration two key aspects of life in the kingdom.
- 8) Persecution – Greek “dioko” means those who are persecuted, made to run from or are driven away. Sometimes as Christians we have to take a stand for what is morally or ethically correct. In some cases we may suffer persecution. Either verbal degradation, being passed over for a promotion, fired, or in some countries, not ours, put to death.

Thus putting the aspects of Love into our lives equips us to be blessed in every situation. Can you see how the beatitudes are interrelated? Can you see how without Agape Love we could never hope to obtain the blessings?

Let’s Review: To be a testament to these beatitudes, we apply the following characteristics of what Agape Love is in our lives:

- Poor in Spirit → Kingdom of Heaven
 - We need to show patience to wait upon God’s perfect timing to bring about the changes in our lives or in the lives of others where there is a need to bend to his will.
 - We need to trust that God in all things he works for our good and the good of others.
 - We need to be truthful with ourselves with regards to what needs to be changed and we need to speak truth in love when we are asked, with the gentleness and meekness of Christ. Not in a mode of superiority but with love. Love rejoices in truth.
 - We need to protect ourselves from harmful situations and we need to protect others from harm wherever we can.

- When someone is low we need to show them that Christ is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Because really faith is the foundation and content of Gods message.
- We need to have and give hope as it is the attitude and focus of love. When a person is poor in spirit they need the eternal hope of Jesus to be the strength to see them through
- We need to walk on the journey and not separate ourselves from others when they are poor in spirit. We need to encourage, and champion Gods children to persevere even in the midst of trial or struggle. We may not know exactly what God is doing but we need to provide a message of Hope
- Mourn → Comforted
 - We need to be patient with those who are going through loss. While it may seem like they should be over it by now, there may be factors in their lives that have not been healed and we need to be sensitive and actively listen for ways in which we can help.
 - We need to be kind to those who mourn. Pasting a smile on your face when someone is mourning is a quick way for them to make the determination that you are a moron. We need to be sensitive to others pain and not try to mask their sorrow with an emotion that is easier for us to deal with.
 - We need to protect the person who is in the frail state of mourning. They are not in desolation. God will never leave them nor forsake them. We need to provide real care and comfort not platitudes.
 - We need to be trustworthy of those who are suffering. Do not be given to gossip.
 - We need to encourage, exhort and edify those who are mourning so that they can see that we are with them. Then need to know that an ending to sorrow is in sight and that if they persevere they will receive the promise.
- Meek – Inherit the Earth
 - We need to encourage people in their giftings. We need to invest the time in active listening and building relationship to determine what a meek individual would like to do. Then we need to encourage and release that person into what they can do in the kingdom. Those who wish to be the greatest in the kingdom of God are often called to be the servant of all.
 - We need to be kind to those who are humble and gentle. There is a tendency in our culture to run rough shod over those who do not assert themselves.
 - We must be careful to protect and respect those who are humble and gentle in nature. This is not a characteristic to be abhorred but one to admire.
 - We note that there is a brokenness to a meek brother or sister. Let us seek to help them persevere until the authority of the father fills them with confidence in whatsoever role he has for them. Remember the meek inherit the earth...
- Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness – Be Filled
 - We need to watch that we do not squash zealous Christians. It is the very nature of hunger and thirsting for righteousness. God tells us that he would rather us

be hot or cold, because if we are lukewarm Christians he will spew us out of his mouth.

- We need to be kind to these excited people and not look down on them as young and naive, but rather seek to have our own desire for Christ re-ignited.
- We must be vigilant to not mistake positional righteousness through Christ for our own sinless perfection. We need to be truthful with ourselves in our position in Christ and seek to understand and be conformed to his likeness.
- We need to expound hope to the zealous that if they persevere they will receive the promises of God.
- Merciful – Shown Mercy
 - We need to be merciful when people transgress against us. If we want to be forgiven we must forgive.
 - We must be patient and wait to see the changes in a person that mercy can bestow. Sometimes the change is not immediate, but a seed has been planted. We are told to be good to those who despitefully use us.
 - When we are merciful we show kindness, where it should not be paid, we show love where none has been earned. This is perfect love. Since perfect love casts out all fear, it is then easy to exhibit mercy as we have no fear that to show mercy would compromise our position.
 - When we show mercy we give hope to those who do not deserve it. Mercy builds trust and even potential friendship. Forgiveness given when it hasn't been earned is a beautiful thing.
- Pure in Heart – See God
 - When we see people who are not at the same place in Christ Jesus that we have attained, we must not look down on them. This would be prideful in ourselves. We need to love people and help them to see a better way. For example, if a man comes forward and states that he has an issue with pornography, we know that that he is struggling and we need to help him to find Purity of Heart. Condemnation isn't the answer. Conviction and accountability through patience and truth, will win the day. Sometimes, pure in heart can be insidious as we may want a certain thing done a certain way for our own benefit, but in our selfishness we refuse to consider the impact on another. God judges our intentions not just our actions.
 - Many are working on purity of heart as it encompasses such a huge range of behaviours and attitudes. We must be diligent and patient to receive the promise. If we find that this is beyond our strength we are invited to cast all our cares on him. He tells us his burden is easy and his yolk is light.
- Peacemakers – Called Children of God
 - Peacemakers by their very nature must be patient and kind. When truth must be spoken it is given in love.
 - For peace in any relationship to be achieved there must be trust. Think about it for a minute. My uncle sells my dad a stolen car. I may still love my uncle but I do not trust him. Real peacemakers, hate the sin but love the sinner.

- Peacemakers must be forgiving and hopeful of the future. Without these characteristics, peacemakers degrade into judges.
- To be a peacemaker you must persevere, you must believe that peace is possible. You must walk in faith. Peacemakers who chose to react in fear seldom achieve their objectives.
- Persecuted for Righteousness Sake – Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven
 - When someone is persecuted or is suffering for Righteousness sake they must be patient or their testimony is blown. When Jesus was reviled he did not revile again. Jesus suffered and died for me, the least I can do is suffer a bit for him. I can feel joy in this because if they hated my saviour and they hate me for the same thing, I must be doing something right.

These are some examples of how when we apply Agape Love, the real unconditional Godly love that we can receive the blessings that he has in store for us. I believe that these are called the beatitudes because they exemplify how Jesus wants us to respond to the circumstances of life. They are in fact BE-ATITUDES.

Our church has stated that we Worship God. To Worship God means to offer up our lives as a living sacrifice to him, it is in this way that we can pray without ceasing. Our church has stated that we love all people. Truly the application of the principle of Agape love will show our love to everyone. Each of the things we discussed brings a culture of honor to our church and by extension to our community. Finally our church states that we embrace community. To embrace means to hold close. When we apply the Godly principles of Agape love in our community, the world can't help but see a difference between us and every non-believer. We act and do things differently, we have a different perspective and we act accordingly. This is the will in Christ Jesus concerning your interactions with each other.

Prayer – Jesus we ask that you will instill in us the characteristics of perfect love so that we can exemplify you in all our interactions. We ask that you help us to glorify you in everything that we do. We pray that as we go forth and make disciples both in and out of the church, that your love will be seen in all that we do. Because God - you are love.