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# **Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit”**

**Making the Spiritual  
Switch**

**528-A**

**Series: The Beatitudes**

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# Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit”

## Making the Spiritual Switch

*“Oh, what bliss, what a beautiful life”* there is for the one who is aware of his insignificance and thus is poor in spirit, submitting himself to God in a state of utter humility and thereby becoming continually aware that God is. God views him internally, possessively, realistically, eternally and expectantly. As we discussed in the last lesson, the poor in spirit are like the ‘55 Chevy that sits in the driveway that is not really worth hauling to the junkyard. The cost of towing seems to be more than the value of the scrap metal. Then, like the young man who took all of his money and invested in that 1955 Chevy, all of a sudden it became something of inestimable value. Why? Because he gave everything he had to purchase it, and because he saw it not as it was, but saw what it could become when restored. God looks at us in that light because He gave everything He had to purchase us. He sees us not as what we are, but as what we can become in Him. We are of inestimable value in the kingdom of God. The balance between those two factors is the beginning of what it means to be poor in spirit.

Our second important principle from the last lesson is the “Calvary Perspective”.

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so  
walk (live) in Him, (Colossians 2:6 NKJV)

As we came to Christ, we came in utter helplessness. That condition and attitude ought to still be ours. When we came to Christ, we came in utter sinfulness. This awareness should still be ours. When we came to Christ, we came in utter humility. This attitude ought to still be ours. When we came to Christ, we came in utter abandonment. We threw ourselves upon Him and said, “If this doesn’t work, I don’t know what will. Lord, help me.” He did. The whole of our lives should still be lived in the framework of those basic attitudes that existed when we first came to Christ.

The third aspect of our study is God’s painting of this Beatitude in the physical realm. I believe that God has a physical portrait of every spiritual truth. He has an enlarged replica of this character quality in life. It is called poverty. That is why He called us poor in

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

spirit. To study it and build a foundation for it, we need to come to understand four basic principles.

Principle 1- God’s basic and consuming concerns for man are spiritual. Now God does care about your job, your marriage, and your finances, but remember that His major concern in your job is how it affects you spiritually. His main concern about your marriage is how you are responding spiritually. His main concern about your finances is that you are in harmony spiritually. God’s main concern is for your spirit,

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4:24 NKJV)

For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? (Mark 8:36 NKJV)

God’s concern for man, therefore, is basically spiritual.

Principle 2- Spiritual truth is everywhere. There is no place you can turn that the truth is not evident as it is simply clothed in physical garments.

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. (Psalm 19:1 NKJV)

So in regard to the picture book of life, you and I can supernaturally learn to make the spiritual switch, that is to see physical things and see the spiritual application. Jesus taught this truth and illustrated it in His ministry at every turn. Wherever He looked, He saw spiritual truth. The problem was that the disciples stumbled. They could not make “Operation SS”, the Spiritual Switch. They couldn’t do it.

A good example of this is when Nicodemus came to Jesus one night and asked, “What is it that I have to do?” Jesus looked to him and said, “Nic, you must be born again from above, a second time.” Nicodemus looked back at Him and began to reason in the physical realm. He asked, “How can I crawl back into my mother’s womb and be born again? It can’t be.” He couldn’t make the spiritual switch. Jesus told him, “You don’t understand. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, but I am talking about spiritual things. I want you to learn spiritual truths. I’m not teaching a lesson on birth, I’m teaching a lesson in spiritual regeneration. You must be born again.”

In John, Jesus was talking about the resurrection when He said,

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.  
(John 2:19 NKJV)

He was teaching a spiritual truth in the physical realm. He was using the temple as an illustration. The angry crowd began to mumble and groan saying, “It took us 46 years to build this temple, and He says He is going to raise it up in three days.” They couldn’t make the spiritual switch. They were seeing physical truth with physical reality and they were not understanding the spiritual significance.

When we look at the parables, all of them were designed to give physical illustrations to draw attention to spiritual truth. In the parable of the “Lost Coin”, Jesus wasn’t teaching about coin collecting, He was teaching about the love of the Father. In the parable of the “Lost Sheep”, Jesus was not teaching about shepherding, He was teaching about the care of the Father. Every one of the parables was designed to teach us a spiritual truth.

Principle 3- Everything made and everything done on planet earth is Christ-significant. Everything. He did it, and He did it for His glory. I believe God is the author of computers. He made the people, gave them the intelligence, provided the raw materials, and by His own design caused them to be made to teach spiritual truth. I believe the electric iron is made for teaching spiritual truth. I believe that everything in your home, in your car and in this universe was made by God, for God to give glory to Jesus Christ. We see this in these Scriptures.

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities...all things have been created by Him and for Him.

And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.  
(Colossians 1:16,17 NASB)

Worthy art Thou, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy pleasure they existed, and were created.  
(Revelation 4:11 NASB)

These things were created to teach spiritual truth. So everything in this universe, everything that you wear today, everything you eat today, everything you do today, everything you see today has spiritual significance. The crux of our beginning to learn is to make the spiritual switch in all things It will set us aglow with excitement about spiritual things. This is the problem

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

that the disciples continued to have. They saw physical reality and they heard physical words, but they could not make spiritual application.

Principle 4- Only those who have God’s spirit in control of their lives can make the spiritual switch. I Corinthians 2:14 says,

But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

(I Corinthians 2:14 NKJV)

I realize, for the most part, this passage is used to define the fact that an unbeliever cannot receive spiritual truth, and that is true. But, I also believe that our ability to receive spiritual truth is proportionate to the amount of control the natural man has in our lives. The “natural man” blocks out our ability to receive and make application. Look at the disciples. Look at the Corinthian church. Look at others who were born again, who received input from the Word of God, yet, could not make the spiritual switch because the natural man was in control of their lives, or, at least, the Spirit was not in control.

With these four principles in mind, we need to remember that God’s basic concern is spiritual. Spiritual truth is everywhere. Everything God ever made was made by Him and for His use spiritually. God’s Spirit, in control of our lives, gives us the capacity to make the switch.

There are four areas in which we can learn spiritual truth from that which is physical. We need to apply these in ever increasing abundance in our lives personally.

1- We learn our basic doctrine and principles from Old Testament illustrations.

2- We learn character, God’s character, and therefore our potential character, from nature.

3- We learn truth from the day-to-day illustrations of the Bible.

4- We can learn truth from the modern devices that man thinks he has created. He hasn’t, and he can’t because he is not a creator. Remember that all things were created by God and for God to the glory of Christ. As I said earlier, I believe God created computers, cars, clocks and all things mechanical. All of them can teach a spiritual truth.

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

The foundation is important. To be poor in spirit you must understand that God has chosen to etch into man’s perspective physical poverty as a picture book to portray the principles of spiritual poverty. I am going to ask you to do a study of poverty. Poverty is relative. You may be thinking, “That’s right, I have some poor relatives,” but that is not what I mean. Poverty being relative means that there is always somebody who is worse off than you are. To see for yourselves, travel to where there are people who have absolutely nothing. They are beggars. Watch a television program or read a book to gain a perspective on what it means to be very, very poor. What we are going to be doing in this lesson and the next is to try to make application of the spiritual principle that everything learned from the poor in the physical realm can be adapted to spiritual truth in learning to become poor in spirit.

In Luke Jesus appeared to be saying the same thing differently. He said,

Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said:  
“Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled.  
Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

(Luke 6:20,21 NKJV)

The literal meaning was not that Jesus was blessing poverty. If He were blessing poverty, He would not have encouraged the church to give to the needs of the poor to alleviate their poverty. That wasn’t His purpose at all. Jesus was not encouraging poverty. He was using poverty as a beautiful illustration of the miraculous attitudes that are forced upon a man who is in a state of physical poverty. Those attitudes can be adapted spiritually by the man who wants to be poor in spirit. It is important that we understand this principle, and that is a case in point.

First of all, we are going to go through Operation SS (that is Spiritual Switch). We will take these four categories and randomly pick out a few of these things to see if we can learn the basics. The basic doctrines and principles of the faith can be learned by looking at illustrations from the Old Testament. There are three principles involved in this process.

Principle 1- Any time you read a story in the Old Testament remember that the illustration is physical. The story is actual, but the message is spiritual. The illustration is physical, the story is actual, but the message is spiritual. Let’s take Jonah. He is

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

sitting by his fireplace and he gets a letter from God. He opens it up and reads it. It says, “Dear Jonah, these are your instructions to preach an evangelistic meeting in Nineveh.” But you see, Jonah didn’t want to go. He decided to take a vacation somewhere else and go off on his own. A storm came, and Jonah decided to go swimming with a little help from the ship’s crew. The rest of the story is somewhat fishy. The whole concept of the thing is smelly. The whole illustration was physical. There was a real man, a real fish, a real storm, a real Nineveh and real repentance. But remember also that the significance was basically spiritual. If you want to learn more about the resurrection turn to Matthew where Jesus said,

Just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster three days and three nights, so must the Son of Man be...

(Matthew 12:40)

Jonah’s story was a picture book of the resurrection. To learn more about repentance, turn to Matthew 12:41. Jesus said,

Jonah preached, men repented and greater than Jonah is here.

(Matthew 12:41 paraphrased)

We can learn about repentance from Jonah. If you want to learn about judgment of the wicked turn to Matthew 16:1-5. Jesus said, “Those who want proof, Jonah is the only proof you will need.” We can take the entire story of Jonah and glean spiritual concepts that will change our lives.

Let’s look at Noah and the ark. He was sitting in his back yard minding his own business. The phone rings and God says, “Noah, I want you to build a boat.” Noah gets out his hammer, saw and all of his tools. It is a physical illustration and an actual story. It is full of spiritual meaning. If you want to understand about the depravity of man in the end times, you can look at Noah in the book of Matthew,

But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

(Matthew 24:37 NKJV)

If you want to understand about faith, turn to Hebrews 11:7, “By faith, Noah.” If you want to learn about the patience of God and the concept of the portrait of baptism, turn to I Peter 3:20 for an illustration through Noah. If you want to learn about the judgment of God who spared not even the angels who left their first estate and at the time of Noah saved only 8 people, turn to II Peter 2:5. We see the principle that we have in the story in

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

which the illustration was physical, the story was actual, but the meaning was spiritual.

The same thing is true of manna. The story is found in Exodus 16. It really happened. It is true. But if you want to know what God was really saying, you need to turn to Deuteronomy 8 to find that God’s concern was spiritual. He said, “I did this for you, because I want you to understand,

...man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord

(Deuteronomy 8:3 NKJV)

We can see that God’s concern was not only spiritual, but it was also beautiful. In Psalm 78:23-25 we see that the Scripture teaches that God gave His children manna which was angel’s food. He wanted them to see a picture that God’s concern was not only spiritual and beautiful but that it was a picture of Jesus. We can learn from these passages that Jesus said,

Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’ (John 6:31 NKJV)

Jesus said the real reason was that,

I am the bread of life.

Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.” (John 6:48-51 NKJV)

We see this principle over and over again. If you want to learn about the principles of spiritual warfare, look at Israel in conflict. You can find out how the enemy works and God’s plan of defense in II Chronicles 20. You can find out God’s logic in Isaiah 55. You can understand God’s guarantee of victory in Joshua chapters 1-5. If you want to understand the principle of separation, just turn to examine Israel when it was occupied either by the enemy or as the victor. You will find the principle of unequal yoking, fellowshiping and transfer of allegiance. You can see all of these principles by looking at God’s picture book of Israel. If you want to understand the doctrine of propitiation and redemption, look at the nation of Israel as in the Old Testament with their sacrifices of the lamb. It will help us understand “*the lamb that was slain*”



## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

*from the foundation of the world*”. If you want to understand the doctrine of salvation and spiritual rest, look at the promised land. The nation Israel was God’s picture book to teach us basic doctrine and basic principles.

Principle 2- We learn God’s character from nature. This is an exciting part for me. I don’t know how many of you enjoy being out alone in nature. You can study nature then go back to the Scripture and see everything that God has to say about that article of nature. You can learn more spiritual truth than perhaps you can learn on tapes or listening to messages.

For instance, we can look at the trees. The tree represents the fruitful life that grows slowly, takes root firmly, and lasts eternally. The character qualities of stability and fruitfulness are found in trees. If you don’t believe it, do a study by looking at Genesis 2:9 which teaches that the tree is the essence of life. Psalm 1:1-3 and Proverbs 11:30 and Jeremiah 17:8 teach that the tree is the essence of fruitfulness. John 15 and Matthew 3 can teach us what God does, in essence, to the trees that are not plugged into the right root system. All of this shows us spiritual truth concerning our growth as believers. Have you ever seen an instant tree? Don’t buy one if somebody tries to sell you one. If you want to see how God works, go out into nature. Leave everything alone, lie under a giant oak tree, and look at the root system. Consider the years it took to go down. Look at the health in the bark. Look at the strength of its might. Look at the leaves and the fruit it is bearing. You can make spiritual application to that truth. You can learn more from trees than perhaps any other single thing in nature.

We can learn from the wind. The mysteries of the spiritual kingdom are like the wind. The mysteries of the Spirit of God are revealed there. The mysteries of the spirit of the enemy can be gleaned from looking at the wind. In John 3:8 we learn of the mystery of godliness as Jesus says that we don’t know where the wind comes from or where it is going, but we do understand basic principles about the wind. It represents the Spirit of God. In Ephesians 14 and James 1:6 we learn that there are other winds that blow that we don’t totally understand. There is a wind that unsettles and confuses. In Acts 2:2 we see the Spirit of God as the wind that blows through the Holy Spirit, filled and endued with power and showing forth both the presence and the power of God. The wind tells us of the sovereignty of God. The wind tells us

Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

of the supremacy of God. The wind teaches us of the Holy Spirit.

We can look at the seasons. They can teach us of the faithfulness of God. Every time the weather begins to change and spring turns to summer and summer turns to fall, we ought to stop and get out our book of remembrance and begin a season of praise. Why? Because in Genesis 8:22 we are told that the seasons will never cease to be as long as this earth is here. It is a sign of the faithfulness of God. We learn in Matthew 24:32,33 that this is a symbol that God’s prophecies will be just as surely fulfilled as the seasons which will never cease to be. We learn in Proverbs 26:1 that you can use this to teach spiritual truth.

How about the ants? How many of you have had an ant colony in your home? You may say you didn’t buy it, they just arrived. Some of you that feel comfortable with it, buy one. We learn in Proverbs 6:6-8 that if you have a problem with diligence, with faithfulness, or with preparation, look at the ants. Just study them. Scripture tells us,

Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise,  
(Proverbs 6:6 NKJV)

You can learn more from them than you can from anything else. They make preparations long before they needs to. You never find an ant sitting down in front of a television set while the house is falling apart. They are always preparing for the future.

Consider the stars. They are perfect examples of how we can learn from nature. You can get God’s perspective of man. Here are five verses that you can look up on your own. Psalm 8:3, Psalm 136:9, Psalm 147:4, Psalm 148:3-5, and I Corinthians 15:41. Study the stars. I’m not going to give you too many hints, but you can learn a lot about the kingdom of God and the people of God by looking at the stars. The sun represents the Son. The moon represents the Holy Spirit, the perfect reflection of the Son who never calls attention to Himself. The stars represent the kingdom of God or the people of God, so diverse and such a multitude of them, but every one is so diverse. Yet we are told in Scripture that there are so many of them in number all being different one from another, but God knows every one of them personally and calls them by name.

In John 10 we can look at sheep. Oh, can we learn from them. The Lord says that we are like sheep. We always like to refer to the Shepherd, but we don’t like to consider the ways of the sheep. Sheep are dumb. Sheep are beautiful animals as long as they

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

are following the shepherd. Anytime they try to go off on their own they get lost or there is trouble and danger. When somebody branches off and leaves the flock, some will follow. They are not real bright. Oh, that we had the attitude of recognizing that we are sheep.

You can look at the grass, the rain, and the rainbow to study principles of spiritual application. Use the multitude of things in nature to study the character of God and man.

Principle 3- We can learn attitudes and behaviors from life illustrations. We won't spend much time here in this particular lesson, but I wanted to mention three.

1) The body. I don't believe that God saw the human body and decided to use it as an illustration of the body of Christ. I believe that God designed the human body the way that He did in order to teach spiritual truth. I believe that we learn in Romans 12 what the body would be like if it were just an eye. What would the body of Christ be if everybody had the same spiritual gift with the same bent? Can you imagine?

We learn in Ephesians 4:16, that God designed the whole body to fit together to make it all work together. Those with the gift of service may be the feet of the church. Those with the gift of mercy may be the heart of the church. Those with the gift of exhortation may be the ears of the church. Those with the gift of giving may be the arms of the church. Those with the gift of prophecy may be the mouth of the church. The administrators are the hands of the church. The researchers are the mind of the church. Whatever philosophy you use in terms of spiritual gifts, we do know and understand that God designed the human body for the sake of teaching truth concerning the body of Christ. Study it and learn how it functions. Everything you learn about how the human body functions should teach you a little bit more about the body of Christ.

2) Sports activities. Paul talked a lot about the races he ran. Some of you can relate to that. I personally like the illustrations of fishing. In Matthew 4:19-22 and many other places Jesus says that the concept of evangelism can best be learned by watching a fisherman. He said,

Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.

(Matthew 4:19)

You remember that fish need water to live in just like we need

the Holy Spirit. You recognize that the fisherman goes where the fish are, he doesn't sit on the bank and wait. You learn that fishermen will appeal to the needs of the individual type of fish they are catching. You don't use the same bait to catch all the different kinds of fish. This is a tough one. Fishermen need to be quiet. Jesus told us that fishermen know that God is the only one who can bring in the net. The disciples had fished all day and got nothing. Jesus came along and told them to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, and God who gives the increase took care of the rest. They could not haul in the load. Timing is important to the fishermen. We learn principles of evangelism from fishing.

3) Modern day machines and devices. I believe that God made computers to teach spiritual truth. Now I realize that they also do a lot of good in your business. They are a beautiful test, because they can spit out the wrong information, and you have to respond properly. But beyond that, I believe that the computer was designed to give man a perfect picture of the human mind and its retentive ability. I don't believe until the computer was designed that man could fully comprehend that “out of the heart proceedeth all of these things,” because we figure we have taken care of all of those things. But all of those things continue to rise up and haunt us, because they were stored in a memory bank in our minds. I don't believe we realize that “*Thy word I have hid in my heart*” means that we have to program the computer specifically with the Word of God so that the Master technician, the Holy Spirit, can call that to our attention at the proper moment.

I believe that washing machines and dryers were given to teach us spiritual truth. The Word says,

You are already clean because of the word which I have  
spoken to you. (John 15:3 NKJV)

If you begin to examine the cycles on your washing machine and the kind of detergent you have to use, you can learn so much about spiritual truth. There is more to it than standing in front of your machine staring at it.

I believe that we never fully understood the principle of an omniscient God until the X-ray machine was developed. Anytime I go to see an X-ray, I more fully begin to realize what the Word means when it says,

I know the thoughts that come into your mind, every one of  
them. (Ezekiel 11:5 paraphrased)

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

I couldn't understand that fully until I saw an X-ray. I believe God designed this as it certainly provides an essential medical need in our lives, but I also believe that it teaches spiritual truth.

I believe that the thermostat has great spiritual value as we look at I Corinthians 10:13. We can learn spiritual truth from comparing the two. II Corinthians 3:18 is best described by watching an escalator. Think about it sometime.

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.  
(I Corinthians 10:13 NKJV)

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.  
(II Corinthians 3:18)

Having laid the foundation, I would like to encourage you to spend some time this week trying to make the spiritual switch in all that you do. When you get in your car and turn on the ignition, think about what that switch represents in spiritual terms. Think about what the fuel represents. Think about what the spark plug does. Think about everything you do and make a spiritual application.

I believe the word *poor* in spirit literally comes from a word which means to beg or beggar. It means one who must beg for the needs of life. Now let's make the spiritual switch and look from the standpoint of physical poverty at what we can learn about becoming poor in spirit.

1) The man who is poor, pitifully poor, becomes vulnerable to humiliation without retaliation. Most of us have never really been poor. Some may think they have, but go out and look at the beggar on the street who has no food, no coins in his pocket and no where to go. You will find that he is vulnerable to severe harassment and humiliation. To be able to take that properly is what it means to be poor in spirit.

James 2:3 is a great reference. It gives the illustration of how a rich man who is finely dressed comes into your congregation and is ushered down to the front seat. Then a poor man comes in wearing old shoes and has uncombed hair. The ushers direct him to sit on the floor, because there are no more chairs. You recall that the book of James says,

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

(James 2:5 NKJV)

He makes the spiritual switch. Imagine your feeling if you were the guy who came into Sunday School this morning and was asked to sit on the floor because your clothes were not as nice as the others. What would your response be? Would you say, “Gee, I’m fortunate to be here, and I would be glad to sit on the floor. I just appreciate the chance to.” That is what it means to be poor in spirit. Proverbs 16:19 says,

Better to be of a humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud. (Proverbs 16:19 NKJV)

Better poor and humble than proud and rich. (Proverbs 16:19 TLB)

Now not all of the poor are humble and not all of the rich are proud. But the principle is that there is a law and effect that causes poverty to produce humiliation, forced humility. You and I, by an attitude of the will, are supposed to learn to be humble. Proverbs 19:7 in the Living Bible says,

The poor man’s own brothers turn away from him in embarrassment; how much more his friends! He calls after them, but they are gone. (Proverbs 19:7 TLB)

Proverbs 14:20 says that even his own neighbors despise the poor man. The principle in Scripture over and over explains to us that there is humiliation that awaits the man who is poverty stricken. Then Jesus makes the spiritual switch and tells us that this is the attitude that He wants us to have towards Him and toward the world about us. He wants us to be willing to be humiliated with no cause for retaliation. That is what it means to be poor in spirit.

In I Peter 2 we read of Jesus who is our perfect illustration,

who, when He was reviled, (humiliated) did not revile in return did not speak out); when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; (I Peter 2:23 NKJV)

Peter says that they railed on him and spit on him and accused him wrongfully as they said,

...If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” (Matthew 27:40 NKJV)

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

Where were Jesus’ rights? They were in Philippians 2 where we read that He had laid them aside for us. That is what it means to be poor in spirit.

2) The poor man is dependent on others for the basics of life. The hardest thing for a Christian to do is to receive help physically and spiritually. Proverbs 13:8 in the Living Bible says,

Being kidnapped and held for ransom never worries the  
poor man. (Proverbs 13:8 TLB)

He was free from that worry. He had the freedom from those pressures because he had nothing to lose. Nobody was going to kidnap him, because he had nothing to lose. That is the attitude we are to have if we are to become poor in spirit.

Proverbs 18:23 says that the poor man pleads, but he gets answers with insults. Are you willing to plead for spiritual things? Are you willing to be dependent upon others for the basics of life? The hardest thing a man has to do is to humble himself to have to be taught. Psalm 40:17 says,

But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me. You  
are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God.  
(Psalm 40:17 NKJV)

That is what God is looking for, people who know that they are poor and needy. God is always ready to meet their needs. We become proud, puffed up and satisfied, and we miss the point. Go talk to a poor man and ask him if he has a need. He will answer, “You have got to be kidding.” It is twenty degrees outside and he has no shoes, no coat and is freezing to death. If you ask, “Fella, can I do anything for you? Do you have a need?” If he sticks his shoulders up and says, “Of course not, I’m doing great,” then you realize that he may be poor, but he is not poor in spirit.

You and I have to recognize our need before the Lord can help us on a day-to-day basis. Most of us don’t do that. We become proud. It eases into our existence and we forget to be poor in spirit. How willing are you not to be spiritually self-sufficient? How willing are you to learn and receive from others even the simplest of truths even if it means embarrassment that you didn’t know it in the first place. The poor man has no choice. That is to be our inner attitude, if you and I are to be poor in spirit.

We need to pay attention to everything that we do as it has spiritual truths and principles that we can learn. It would be helpful to do a study on the characteristics of the things God

## Portraits of the “Poor in Spirit” - Making the Spiritual Switch

has provided for us. The poor man must accept his role of insignificance. Can we? The poor man has to labor to make other people successful. Are we willing to do that? A study on poverty will help us to understand what it means to be poor in spirit. Magazine articles or television programs concerning poverty will be a learning experience as you look not just from a standpoint of seeing physical poverty, but look for applications on what it means to be poor in spirit.

God is an artist. He has painted for us visible, physical portraits. In the Old Testament, He has given us the doctrines and principles for life. In nature, He has given us the character of God and the character of man. In life He has given us the principles and practices of our spiritual walk. With the modern conveniences and devices of life He has given us visible evidence of His world, His worth, His works, His Word and His ways. But the ultimate goal is spiritual. It was and is that all things were created for Him, and in the spirit you and I can make the spiritual switch. He has called upon us to become poor in spirit, but He has not left us without visible, physical, tangible evidence of what He means. Learn to make the spiritual switch. Study what it means to be poor, so that you can understand what it means to be poor in spirit.

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

Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly “hear” his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It’s been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that’s a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you “hear” as you read.

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