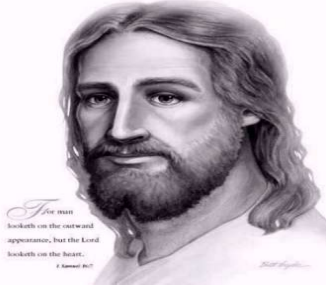


"Blessed Are"



Matthew 5:3-12

Today many programs, methods, treatment and counseling facilities are available to help individuals seeking recovery from drug or alcohol addiction. But, their programs will never match the program of God. His program of recovery will forever be true and can be based on what Jesus spoke in the Sermon on the Mount.

The very words Jesus spoke in "The Beatitudes" can offer a framework of hope for those of us walking on a journey to deliverance from chemical dependency and onto wholeness and restoration in Christ Jesus.

Matt 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

1. Our compulsion is a disease of the spirit. While in bondage to something of this world, we cannot at the same time love and serve God. (Matthew 6:24) Our compulsion separates us from God because it cripples us in mind, body, soul and in spirit. *Addiction has both life-threatening and life-confusing consequences to it.*
2. We became aware that we as an addict or alcoholic were spiritually bankrupt. We had become both broken and bruised not only physically and mentally but also spiritually. We were living by worldly standards and self-will.
3. While actively using a mind or mood altering substance we were without God's spiritual resources and were *taking a journey of spiritual bankruptcy.* We had to recognize our powerlessness over addiction. We had to recognize we were not spiritually self-sufficient and we needed the Holy Spirit's power and sustaining grace in order to be an over comer and inherit God's eternal kingdom.
4. Because our compulsion to use is a disease of the spirit we must be guided through life by God's will in living both clean and sober. We must be guided by his values revealed in scripture and not by the ways and values of this world. *Jesus Christ is the key to restoration and the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Matt 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn: for they shall be comforted.

1. All must deal with sorrow even though we may try to stuff it down and ignore it. We may even try to drown it by giving in to our addiction or avoid feeling it by intellectualizing. The sorrow of past wrong doing just doesn't go away overnight and we must accept the sorrow that will be a part of our restoration process.
2. We should mourn over our weakness in relation to God's standard of righteousness and His kingdom power. We should mourn over the reproach we have brought upon the kingdom of God. And we must come to the understanding that we did break the heart of God by our sin, immorality and worldly lifestyle.
3. God will use this very sorrow to help turn us away from sin and seek salvation. Such godly sorrow works repentance in our heart and through repentance we will be comforted by receiving from the Father *"righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Ghost."*
4. There are important moments in life that can often change our destiny. Today, take the necessary time alone with God, not as a punishment and not as a morbid self-condemnation, but as a time of honest self-evaluation. Take the time to recognize and truly mourn the loss that came upon your own life through active addiction. As you face the pain and sadness you will need the *"joy of the Lord"* to give you strength. This joy will come from recognizing, even celebrating, Gods ability to bring you out of bondage and care for you as you pass through the valley of sadness toward a new way of life.

Matt 5:5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

1. Reversing the patterns of sinful or addictive behavior can be extremely difficult and discouraging. We may feel cut off from God and our genuine remorse may cause us to wonder if we even dare approach God to ask for help.

2. *The meek are the humble* and it is the humble heart that opens the door to God. The humble are those who place their life in God's hands and he will reshape them as he sees fit.
3. It is our humility (*meekness*) that will allow us to accept the fact the he is the "Creator" and God is the "Master Craftsman". What ever he does, we can trust that he will recreate our life beautifully, *once we get out of his way!*
4. For many giving up control may be difficult. When ready for God to remove our character defects, we may want to control how he does it. We are so used to calling our own shots that we may even ask for God's help as long as he does it on our terms and on our timetable. We will never experience a God-blessed recovery without true humility (*meekness*).
5. *Meekness is not a weakness*. But rather it is being able to commit our way entirely to Him. To be ready, willing and able to trust in God, and obey his Word. That means having faith in Jesus Christ to make up for our weakness in both character and action.
6. The meek will be more concerned about doing His will. They will be more concerned about what God thinks. They will be more concerned about God's ways and come to hate what this world of active addiction and spiritual death has to offer.

Matt 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

1. The foundational requirement for all godly living is to "*hunger and thirst for righteousness.*" Our spiritual condition throughout life will depend upon our hunger and thirst for the presence of God, for His Word and fellowship with the Holy Spirit. *We must not allow anything to diminish this intense desire.*
2. It isn't a problem to hunger or thirst, but the problem will arise depending on what we hunger or thirst for. If it is someone or something other than God we could be destroyed spiritually and in bondage again to worldly pleasures, fleshy lusts, addiction and sin. *Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matthew 4:4)*
3. When we hunger and thirst for righteousness, when we believe in God and the restoration he offers in Jesus Christ, an exchange takes place. We turn our unmanageable life over to God, including our sins and guilt and *he fills us with his goodness and forgiveness in return.*
4. There is power in God's Word and there is power in living in God's will. In recovery we struggle to move out of a difficult past into a healthier future. The primary source of strength and guidance for any addict to accomplish this task is found in a relationship with the Father and in the Word. We cannot know God's will unless we know what the Bible says. By seeking after his righteous through scripture he will enable us to follow his instructions in rebuilding our broken life.

Matt 5:7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

1. Jesus taught that it is just as important to forgive others that have offended us as it is for us to be forgiven. Forgiveness will free us from the pain and bondages of anger, bitterness and resentment and forgiveness will help us move forward in God and in recovery. *Unforgiveness will keep us in bondage and could be the very reason we return to active addiction. Being merciful frees us from the torture of festering resentments.*
2. When we look at all that God has forgiven us for does it make sense to choose not to forgive others? If we choose to live in yesterday's pain of unforgiveness we will not be able to totally focus our life on God, his eternal kingdom and his delivering power.
3. Mercy and forgiveness should be freely extended to others with, "*No Stings Attached*" and all it takes is the willingness. We can't change what others have done to us, but we can write off their debt just as the Lord wrote off ours. We cannot allow unforgiveness to hinder our ability to enjoy the freedom we have found in God's forgiveness.

Matt 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

1. Through active addiction we may feel as if our life was a battleground. We were a prisoner in the ongoing war between good and evil. Today we ask ourselves, "If I turn my will and my life over to God, will he rescue me and keep me safe? Will one day come when I too will stand before him in reverence and awe? The answer is "Yes." No matter how terrible the battles we face, we can turn our will and our life over to God and have a sure hope for a future in him.
2. The pure in heart are those who have been delivered from sin's power by the grace of God. The pure in heart will strive daily to please and glorify God and to become more like Him. The pure in heart will seek to have the same attitude of heart as God. A love of righteousness and a hate for evil. *Only the pure in heart will both stand before and see God.*

3. Throughout scripture God repeatedly reminds his people that he wants to be a loving father to them but few truly understand the depth of God's fatherly love. What a wonderful God who waits patiently for the day to come when we turn to him face to face and call him, "Father"!

Matt 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God.

1. Much of recovery requires repairing the brokenness in our life. This requires that we make peace with God, with ourself and peace with others whom we have alienated. Unresolved issues in relationships can keep us from being at peace with God and self. (*Ask God to reveal to you any of these unresolved issues.*) Some may not forgive us and others may need some time, but in either case leave it to God and it can happen in his perfect time.
2. As his children he will equip us to live at peace even in the midst of tough times and mighty storms. The "Peacemakers" have been reconciled to God and they have peace with Him through the cross of Christ.
3. When we remove all the worldly idols from our lives by which we attempted to meet our needs we will have repositioned our relationship with God. Through this we will find comfort in knowing that God is bigger than our past. No matter what we have done, what idols we may have served or who we are; we are saved by grace (*the undeserved favor from God*) through faith (*complete trust*) in Christ. We can stand before God, justified---declared "Not Guilty." *That good news brings peace to those who were once bound and are now called his children"!*

Matt 5:10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

1. The principals of God will never change and it will take great wisdom and patience from above to survive in a world that does not acknowledge God or is little concerned with your being a Christian or your recovery program.
2. Former friends may have been surprised when we no longer joined them in their worldly ways. Those old friends and acquaintances may attempt to drag us down or pull us down with their "accusing tongues." *They can ridicule us to the point we want to give up hope.* In our distress we may wrongly assume that we are alone in the battle of recovery, in this battle between good and evil; yet God is always there, answering our cries for help. *No situation is too tough for God to handle.*
3. We will undergo trials, unpopularity, rejection, criticism, persecution and opposition from the world's standards so we must make the approval of God more important than the approval of our fellow human beings. *Those who suffer and endure persecution because of their relationship with God and His righteousness are promised the Kingdom of God and Heavenly Rewards.*

Matt 5:11 Blessed are you, when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

1. Throughout the Bible we have been warned about the power of others to lead God's people away from God. Some people may even be threatened by our recovery and others may do everything they can to drag us down.
2. They may ridicule your relationship with God and they may even call you a weak Christian even though his word states that I can do all things through Christ who will strengthen me. . When this happens, we need to remain obedient to the truth and steadfast in our relationship with God. We must resist what the world says and continue daily seeking His approval and not the approval of the world
3. Friends and family may wish us well in our recovery and walk with God and there will be other's who will attempt to persecute us, attempt to predict our next failure or wait for us to fall. After all, some individuals may not want us to deal truthfully with our hang-ups because in doing so might expose their own. At these vulnerable times when our enemy is hard at work trying to ruin our life through deception, lies, and discouraging words we must stay focused on God; *He wants to become our stabilizing factor in the midst of persecution and worldly pressures.*

Trusting God is critical in every stage of recovery and he was never put off by the foolish things we did.

He sees what we do and chooses to love and heal us anyway!

He will keep leading us toward recovery, one step at a time because as

Christians in recovery: *"We walk by faith and not by sight"!*