

When we think of the beatitudes, think of a ladder with 8 rungs that we climb to become worthy disciples of Christ.

1. Blessed are the poor in spirit: Do you want to be happy? Blessed? Satisfied? Fulfilled? You need to become poor in spirit, where you reach in your spiritual pockets and you turn them inside out and all you've got are little lint balls.

You will never, ever be happy in life until you recognize when you're spiritually busted and you admit that you need God in your life. This is Jesus saying: Listen, the pride's got to drop. You've got to say I need God. That's the first rung

2. The next one is, blessed are they that mourn. Jesus is laying these out in logical progression. Blessed are they that mourn over the fact that they're poor in spirit.

When you get to that point where it isn't just head knowledge of Yeah, I think I need God. No, this when your heart starts to get real soft and you weep over your sin.

+Think of when Peter denies Jesus. It says that Peter went out and he wept bitterly. He just lost it over his sin.

Ever done that? Sometimes it just feels great to say, "God, here is who I really am and I am really sorry for all of this."

3. The third rung is blessed are the meek. When you hear the word meek some of us might think of being a weak and wimpy type of person. That's not what meek means at all. Jesus is saying once you discover you're poor in spirit and it does something in your heart, then it's time to come to God and surrender our life.

If we turn only to ourselves, you're going to be in a big dilemma. Self is unreliable. Self is undependable; self-rationales too much. Self cannot accomplish anything eternal.

It is to recognize our weakness and have God fill the void. It is to surrender ourselves to the Potter's hand, to be molded and used. Behind that meekness is the power of almighty God.

Think of Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Martin Luther King. +Lenin is reported to have said on his deathbed, "If I had ten young men like Francis of Assisi I could have averted the Bolshevik Revolution."

4. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after the ways of God. Those who hunger for God are satisfied.

Your appetite starts to change. You're no longer, really hungry over stuff like popularity. You're not really hungry anymore over prestige or power or materialism. You're hungry for the things of God now.

And as you hunger for the things of God you're going to get filled because you've discovered that those other things leave you unsatisfied, but the things of God don't. They fill you with purpose as you know that God truly loves you. Your life begins to change.

So in those first four you have your internal foundation, but we can't stop there. Those are your preparation, but the next four is your presentation, where your life is to shine before all – we have to witness.

5. Blessed are those who show mercy to others. What is the first thing that comes out of your life after all this inside stuff's been going on is the very thing you have just received from Christ? Mercy.

Mercy starts to come out you. If God loves me, now I love you because of what's going in the inside of me. It's got to flow into my hands and my feet and my wallet and my actions.

6. What's the next rung? "Blessed are the pure in heart." The word purity here is about sincerity, being honest with God. You're not covering up anything. You're always honest with God. You're honest with other people. You're authentic and people take notice – you're the salt of the earth kinda person.

Jesus is saying: Blessed are you when you're real because you can't see God when you're wearing a mask. Blessed are you when you take the mask off. You're a pure heart. You say, "God what you see is what you get. No more secretes."

7. "Blessed are the peacemakers: He's talking about the person that is slow to speak and quick to listen, with a gentle spirit. They have great discernment. They just walk into a room and it changes. There're two kinds of people: There's a thermometer and a thermostat.

Now what's a thermometer do? It adjusts to the climate of the room. What's a thermostat do? It sets the climate of the room. Jesus is saying blessed are the thermostats. Blessed are the ones that can walk into any situation and just change that climate because they're so full of God.

8. So you have reached the final ring – victory – great stuff coming my way! Then you hear, "Blessed are the persecuted – persecution comes to those who are like Jesus.

When you're on top people want to knock you off. Sometimes when people see Christ in you, they don't know how to handle you, they don't know what to do with you.

*I think of Tim Tebow and how he is belittled, how he has been mocked because of his faith and his public witness of that faith. They didn't know how to handle Jesus. It was for envy that they nailed him to a cross.

So there you have it! Eight steps to Christian Discipleship. Now we've just got to admit where

we are and where we need to go.