

A group of people in winter gear are gathered around a campfire in a snowy mountain landscape at sunset. The scene is dimly lit, with the warm glow of the fire and the sunset providing the primary light sources. The people are wearing heavy jackets and hats, suggesting cold weather. The background features a large, snow-covered mountain peak under a hazy sky.

# THE BEATITUDES

BEAUTIFUL CHARACTER  
FORMED BY CHRIST

PT. 1:  
BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

## WHO DO YOU WANT TO BE?

Imagine you walk into a new school on the first day, and ask yourself "Who am I going to be here? What kind of character am I going to pursue?". If you want popularity, you might quickly set about finding out what it is that will make you popular. If you want to be the best in a certain sport or activity, you might find a way to assert your dominance and put others down. That's what the world wants you to ask: "Who do you want to be?" And then make it happen. Jesus, however, presents a totally different approach to that "who do you want to be" question. And he offers different answers than the world. Instead of seeking power, dominance, popularity, or "don't give a care about what other people think" attitudes, he presents...beatitudes. Character that is formed by Jesus and that God blesses. Character that counts for God's Kingdom and that is shaped not by individual desires or out of desiring community honour but character shaped by...God himself. After all, He created us, and He wants us to have a relationship with Him and a life that "images", looks like, Him. So, let's ask: Who does God want me to be? And even,, who is God making me to be?



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

This is one very important place to start, and, not surprisingly, Jesus begins by laying out the posture of our heart - the attitude that we are to come to God with in the first place.



# //POOR IN SPIRIT//

One of the experiences that marked my high school years was what might be known as "bullying." Despite being a high school athlete and musician, I was rejected, kept out of the "in crowd" because of my faith. I spent much of my lunch hours walking around school alone. It wasn't long before, well, you'd start to notice other people walking around, spending their lunch hour alone too. I noticed one guy who sat at the same place everyday at lunch, hunched over as he ate, day after day. Extremely quiet and unable to carry a conversation, he was always left out. Every lunch hour, I would go over and chat with him. We never did end up becoming fast friends, but on any school project, I had the opportunity to be his partner.

Those long high school years cemented in me the idea of being "poor in spirit." I longed for the day when I would be surrounded by friends, pursuing God together in joy and loving one another (and it did come!), but those high school years were formative, because my awareness of others who were "poor in spirit" shaped me and reminded me of who God was calling me to be. Of who I was before God and who God was calling to Himself. People who are poor in Spirit. Being in that position made me available to hear God's Word and to seek it. And I learned something about my need for God, and utter dependance on Him for so much!



The word translated "poor" can also mean lowly, or "of humble estate". It means to be humble or lowly. Proverbs 16:19 says, "Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud." And God says "I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite."(Isaiah 57:15) There's that blessing that Jesus says is found in His Kingdom. Lowly hearts are revived. Amazing!

But what exactly does it mean to be "poor in spirit?" One theologian says, "poverty of spirit is the personal acknowledgment of spiritual bankruptcy." To put another way, it means that we have a failing grade when it comes to our spirit life, and we can't make enough good grades to pass the course called "Righteousness." We are poor in Spirit. We can't save ourselves, and so we depend completely on God for our salvation. It's not self-hatred, and it can't be achieved by "sham humility." It's a genuine posture of our heart because we see our deep need of God to shine in our life. We become empty before God, so he can fill us.



## REFLECT

1. John Stott says, "The poor in the Old Testament are those who are both afflicted and unable to save themselves and who therefore look to God for salvation while recognizing they have no claim upon God."

What are some things in your life that you often "claim" as meriting God's favour because you "do" them, or "act" them out?

2. What do you think of when you think of "poor". Make a brainstorm list of characteristics you think about "the poor".

3. In what ways do you approach God with pride rather than humility?

## PRAY

1. Read Psalm 13. What does this Psalm tell you about "being in poor in Spirit?" Where does the Psalmist end his prayer?
2. Write down the names of two people you know who are feeling "poor in Spirit." Pray for them this week.
3. Take a sentence or two from these Psalms and pray them for yourself and for these people. Ask God to form in you a heart that depends on Him and knows your need for Him.

## ACT

1. Take a walk around your school or neighbourhood. Who do you see that is alone or maybe "poor in Spirit and in need." Write their names down or make a note of who they are.
2. Pray for them!
3. Talk to them. Reach out to them in a small way, maybe its saying hi or sharing a story, poem, or joke. Find a way to reach out to others and be mindful of what it means to be "poor in Spirit."
4. If you've read all this, and struggle with seeing how you are in spiritual need, take this and talk to a friend, leader, or a parent and ask them to help you see how you are in spiritual need.