

Session 1 – What Does Successful Living Look Like?

Matthew 5:1–16



What Does Successful Living Look Like?

- Every culture has its own definition of success.
- Some define success as wealth, power, recognition, or personal achievement. Others measure success through influence, comfort, or security.
- But when Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount, He introduces a completely different vision of what a truly blessed life looks like.
- Before describing what His followers should *do*, Jesus first describes **who they are becoming**.



Matthew 5:3–10 (The Beatitudes)

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied. God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.



What Does “Blessed” Mean?

- The word translated “**blessed**” can also mean *flourishing, deeply fulfilled, or living in the favor of God*.
- Jesus is not describing temporary happiness or outward success. He is describing the **kind of life that grows when a person is aligned with the heart of God**.
- In other words:
 - The Beatitudes are not simply commands.
 - They are **a portrait of the character that develops in people who live in God’s Kingdom**.



A Different Definition of Success

Notice how different Jesus' description of blessing is from the values most societies celebrate.

- Jesus calls blessed:
 - the humble rather than the powerful
 - the merciful rather than the aggressive
 - the peacemakers rather than the victorious
 - those who hunger for righteousness rather than personal gain
- The life Jesus describes is not centered on **self-advancement**, but on **transformation of the heart**.



Understanding the Beatitudes

Matthew 5:3–10

- The Beatitudes are not simply a list of virtues to admire. They describe the **spiritual journey of a life shaped by God's Kingdom**.
 - Each statement builds on the one before it, describing the transformation that takes place as a person turns toward God.



1. Blessed are The Poor in Spirit

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

- This is the beginning of the journey.
 - To be poor in spirit is to recognize our **complete dependence on God**.
 - It is the honest admission that we cannot save ourselves, fix ourselves, or live rightly without Him.
 - The Kingdom begins when we recognize **our need for God**.



2. Blessed are Those Who Mourn

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.”

- Once we recognize our need for God, we begin to see the reality of our sin and brokenness.
 - This mourning is not simply sadness—it is **repentance**, a deep awareness that our lives and the world around us are not as God intended.
- God’s promise is that those who turn toward Him in repentance will receive **comfort and restoration**.



3. Blessed are The Humble (Meek)

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.”

- Humility grows out of repentance.
 - When we recognize our need for God and turn from our sin, we begin to live with a different posture toward others.
 - Humility places things in the right order:

God first
Others second
Ourselves last

This is the opposite of the self-centered way the world usually operates.



4. Blessed are Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”

- Having turned toward God, the heart begins to desire more of Him.
 - Just as hunger and thirst are daily physical needs, righteousness becomes a **daily spiritual longing**.

Those who follow Jesus develop a deep desire for **God's will, God's justice, and God's ways.**



5. Blessed are The Pure in Heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”

Purity of heart means living with **undivided devotion to God**.

- The heart is no longer pulled in competing directions. Instead, it becomes aligned with God’s character, truth, and love.
 - Notice how God’s focus is on the **inward condition of the heart** and not **just outward behavior**.
 - Right behavior flows from a pure heart. A pure heart does not flow from right behavior!

Purity is not perfection—it is **sincerity and faithfulness toward God**.



6. Blessed are The Peacemakers

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

A transformed heart begins to shape relationships.

- Those who belong to God seek peace:
 - peace with God
 - peace with others
 - reconciliation where there is conflict

Peacemaking reflects the character of God, who is always working toward restoration. **This is our greatest witness to others of our relationship with God!**



7. Blessed are The Those Persecuted for Righteousness

“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

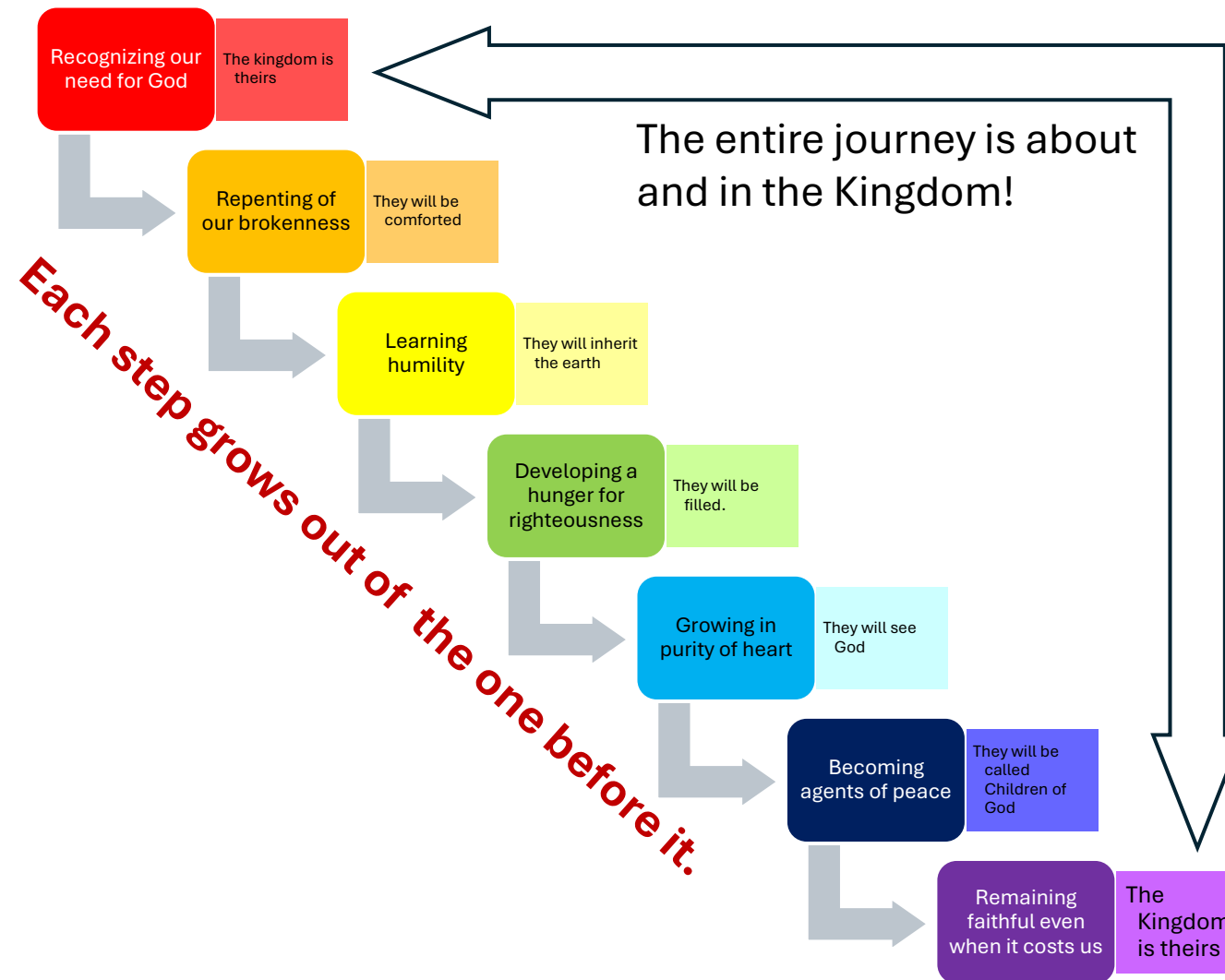
When a person lives according to the values of God’s Kingdom, the world will not always understand.

- At this point the believer’s identity is no longer defined by the world but by **belonging to God**.
 - Faithfulness may bring opposition, but it also reveals that our lives are now aligned with God’s Kingdom.
 - The opposition is not ultimately against the believer — it is against the **Kingdom they now belong to**.



Key Insight

The Beatitudes describe a **journey of transformation**:



From Transformation to Influence

Jesus first describes **who Kingdom people become.**

- Only then does He explain **what their lives begin to do in the world.**
 - Transformed hearts naturally produce visible lives.
 - **This is why Jesus immediately says:**
 - “You are the salt of the earth.”
 - “You are the light of the world.”



You Are the Salt of the Earth

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?”

Matthew 5:13

Salt had several important uses in the ancient world:

- **Preserving food** from decay
- **Enhancing flavor**
- **Symbolizing covenant and faithfulness**
 - Jesus is saying that the lives of His followers **preserve goodness and truth in a broken world.**
 - When people who belong to God's Kingdom live differently, they **slow the decay of the world around them.**
 - But when believers lose their distinctiveness, their influence disappears.

Kingdom living must remain visible and distinct.



Salt That Loses Its Saltiness

“It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.”

Matthew 5:13

In Jesus’ day, salt was often **mixed with other minerals** from the Dead Sea.

- When the true salt dissolved away, what remained **looked like salt but had no power left.**
 - Jesus warns that people who claim faith but no longer reflect God’s character **lose their influence.**
 - The danger is not simply failure.
 - The danger is becoming **indistinguishable from the world around us.**

A transformed life must remain distinct.



You Are the Light of the World

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”

Matthew 5:14

Light reveals what darkness hides.

- Jesus tells His followers that their lives should **make God visible to the world.**
 - A city on a hill could be seen from miles away at night.
 - In the same way, the lives of God's people are meant to be **visible expressions of God's Kingdom.**

Faith was never meant to be **hidden or private.**



Let Your Light Shine

“Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.”

Matthew 5:15-16

Light exists **to be seen**.

- Kingdom living naturally becomes visible through:
 - compassion
 - integrity
 - humility
 - mercy
 - peace
 - These visible expressions of God's character become a **witness to others**.
- “**Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.**”
- The goal is not attention for ourselves.
 - The goal is that **people see God**.



A Life That Points to God

Jesus does not say:

“Make people admire you.”

He says:

“Let them see your life and **glorify your Father in heaven.**”

- Kingdom influence is never about **self-promotion**.
 - It is about **reflecting the character of God**.
 - When people see lives shaped by humility, mercy, purity, and peace, they begin to see **what God is like**.

This is how the Kingdom spreads.



Where Jesus Goes Next

After describing the character and influence of Kingdom people, Jesus addresses a question many people would naturally ask:

“If this is the life God desires, what about the Law?”

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”

Matthew 5:17

Jesus now turns to the deeper issue:

What does true righteousness actually look like?

This leads to the next part of the Sermon on the Mount.



Key Insight – The Shape of Kingdom Living

Jesus describes a life that moves in three stages:

1. Kingdom Transformation

(God changes the heart)

2. Kingdom Influence

(That transformed life impacts the world)

3. Kingdom Righteousness

(Jesus now explains what true obedience looks like)

The rest of the Sermon on the Mount will explore this deeper righteousness.



Reflection Questions

1. Which Beatitude describes where you are most right now in your spiritual journey?
2. Where do you see God forming the next step in your life?
3. In what ways does your life act as salt and light in the world around you?
4. Where might God be calling you to live more visibly as a follower of Christ?



Key Takeaway

Successful living, according to Jesus, is not defined by power, wealth, or status. It is defined by a life that is:

- dependent on God
- transformed by repentance
- shaped by humility
- hungry for righteousness
- pure in heart
- committed to peace
- faithful even when it costs something

This is the life of someone who belongs to the Kingdom of God.

