

The Beatitudes and Marriage

(Matthew 5:3-9).

by Charles B. Hodge, Jr.

I am interested in your attitude. I am not interested in where you have been or what you have done. I don't care how wrong you are. If you have the right attitude, we can sit down and make progress. If your attitude is poor, though you may be awfully close to the kingdom of God, we have trouble.

The Beatitudes deal with attitudes. In the word *beatitude*, there is a command. I am not in philosophy today; I am in life. "Make this your attitude," Jesus is saying. Make this your lifestyle; make this the way you approach life.

The Beatitudes picture the life of Christ. I fail in practicing what I preach. I try, but just like you, I fail. But Jesus didn't. He preached it and lived it. If you would like to sum up the life of Christ in a few verses, just read the Beatitudes. When you become that man of Matthew 5, the result will be Jesus Christ. So if you would like a little checklist on how you measure up in the stature of Christ, just look at Matthew 5.

If you were to take all the psychology we have ever learned and boil it all down to the milk of the coconut, it would be the Beatitudes. The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest psychological statement ever given man.

I am going to apply the Beatitudes strictly to marriage. You don't build a marriage. You build people. People are in marriage. You can't take two bad people and have a good home. You can't take two miserable, unhappy persons and hitch them up and magically have a happy home. You take two great happy, Christian people and hook them up, and they can build a majestic home. I am in the people-building business.

I have been reading that by the year 2000 marriage will be extinct. But people are still interested in marriage. If my mother and daddy live until June 4, they will have been married sixty-four years. Isn't that great? Sixty-four

years! My wife and I are in our thirtieth year. Nothing is as wonderful as marriage. If you ask anybody on earth who is halfway accountable, he will tell you, "I would give anything to have a good home."

People are also interested in improving their marriage. That is why I preach more sermons on marriage than any other topic. The way to build a Duncanville church is to build individual Christians in their homes. This church is no stronger than the homes that constitute it. So I am going to be working on your home because that will build a church. People want to improve at home.

I learned a truth down on the coast which will illustrate the philosophy behind this lesson: "When the tide comes in, all the ships rise." When I help you in any one area, I help you in all areas. If I can get the tide up, the ships will go up with it.

I. "I WAS WRONG."

Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit:..." The poor in spirit are the totally abandoned in spirit. Now Jesus didn't say self pity. He didn't say, "Blessed is the man who says, Woe is me; I am nothing." He does not commend poor self-esteem. Poor in spirit means to literally pour out self. We have to be emptied before we can be filled. I have to pour Hodge out before I can be filled with Jesus Christ.

How do we apply this to marriage? It means we can say, "I was wrong." Can you say, "I was wrong"? Some men and women can't say it. The man who is empty of pride and vanity can. He can just go before his mate and say, "Honey, I am wrong." Haven't I just straightened up all of the marriages in Duncanville? Am I not right? I have to be right because this is Jesus speaking. He is giving us the Magna Carta of Christianity. He says we will always have problems at home

as long as big old swollen pride is dominant. Jesus said, "You must pour yourself out to build a marriage."

I tell kids, "Before you marry, find a mate that will love God more than you." Somebody said, "But, brother Hodge, I am dating a girl and I love her more than anyone else." If you are going to build a home, you have to love God more than your mate. The greatest thing God ever did for me was give me a wife who loves God more than her husband. When you love God and put Him first, He will take care of the other details. Boys and girls, I want your mate to love you, but marry a person who will love God more than you.

II. "PLEASE FORGIVE ME."

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn..." Moderns say, "Don't cry; be tough; be strong." You have to have "heart" in marriage. It is not a business transaction. I know we sign papers. I know we buy a license and say the vows. But marriage is more than a business deal. Many people would not divorce for anything in the world, but they are emotionally divorced while they live in the same house. It is not enough not to divorce. God wants a happy Christian home. A lot of people say, "My religion forbids me to divorce," but God also told you and your mate to love each other. Are you obeying that command? Some of you are divorced emotionally and that is wrong. It is wrong just to live in the same house. God wants a happy home.

What do we learn from the second beatitude? Twist your mouth and say, "Please forgive me." There are times when husbands and wives just need to have a big cry. If there is anything that can break the ice, it is for an old boy just to walk up and say, "Please forgive me." It is kind of hard to stay mad at him when he has that spirit, isn't it? Jesus is telling us, "Mates have to forgive each other." Every day my wife gives me charity. She puts up with the things that bother her. A lot of times it is just kind of understood because we know each other so well. "Please forgive me."

III. "LET US DO WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU."

Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek, . . ." In my counseling the man is the silent husband and the woman is the nagging wife. Isn't that pretty well the case? The man won't say anything. He just

watches football. Right? He watches so much football in the fall that he is a zombie all summer. Anybody who would watch golf on television has to be a zombie. So the woman says, "Brother Hodge, if he would just yell now and then." Then he says, "And she just nags me to death."

The word *meeek* refers to the taking of an animal and harnessing, saddling, and working it instead of just letting it run wild at will. What is the lesson we learn about marriage? "Let us do what is best for you." That will make a good home.

At a big seminar the men were telling what they did. "I am a C.P.A.," one said. "Well, I am a doctor," another said. One old boy stood up and gave his name and said, "My job is to make my boss look good." Everybody just snickered. But isn't that good advice? What if every husband and wife today tried to make the other look good? Wouldn't that be a wonderful home? I am to make the elders look good. The elders ought to make the deacons look good. The deacons ought to make the members look good. The members ought to make the preacher look good. If every member here at Duncanville were trying to make the other look good, wouldn't it be a wonderful church?

If you are miserable and you think marriage is the solution to your problems, forget it. If you are unhappy before you get married, I figure you are going to be unhappy after you get married. There is no magic in marriage. Marriage is not the solution to life. I hear people say, "But, brother Hodge, I have my needs and wants." The paradox in life is that the more a mate serves the other mate and makes that mate happy, the happier he becomes. Here is a young man who says, "Honey, make me happy." You couldn't make that rascal happy if you tried. But what thrills me is that when I make my wife, children, or mother happy, then I am on cloud nine.

IV. "LET US DO WHAT IS RIGHT."

Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst. . . ." What is He saying here? "Let us do what is right." Somebody says, "Brother Hodge, let us manipulate." No. Somebody says, "Let us play like it doesn't exist." No. Somebody says, "Maybe we can kind of deceive them here." No. We are always trying to circumvent, pro-

mote, cover up, and perfume. It won't work. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: . . ." Be right! Determine what is right and then do it. This is the only way to life. If you want me to make a visit and you say, "Now, brother Hodge, don't tell them I sent you," I won't go. When we start deceiving and manipulating, I am not going to have any part in it. Let us go in and say, "Let us do what is right."

V. "I FORGIVE YOU."

Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, . . ." Jesus said, "Go ye and learn what this meaneth. I will have mercy and not sacrifice." A man cannot learn mercy from law. Mercy is the result of grace. When a man has a mercy problem, he has had a grace problem. Legalism chokes on the word *mercy*. In the home we need grace. I need it and you need it. Love covers a multitude of sin. Christianity is not "pie-in-the-sky" fairy tale-ism. Christianity is grace. The result of grace is mercy.

"I forgive you." Oh, burn your grudges. We are like an old dog that buried his bone in the backyard. But we dig up that "bone," don't we? I was counseling with a man one time and he said, "That is when my wife gets historical." I said, "Sir, the word is not *historical*. It is *hysterical*." He said, "Oh, no, counselor, it is *historical*." Every time I come home my wife brings up my history." You can't live that way. Let dead dogs lie. Bury it. When you forgive, forget it.

VI. "I LOVE AND TRUST YOU COMPLETELY."

Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, . . ." The word is clean, unalloyed, single. I am faithful to my wife, not because of my love for my wife. I am faithful because of my wife's love for me. There is not a person on earth who can be unfaithful if he knows his mate loves him totally. When a counselee says to me, "Brother Hodge, he doesn't love me anymore," then Katy bar the door. That means I can do anything I am big enough to do. But when a person knows how much his mate loves and trusts him, he will stay honest. I know my wife loves and trusts me. "Pure in heart" means: "I love and trust you completely." So many husbands and wives don't have that kind of trust. They are in bad shape.

Say, "I trust you. I believe in you. I love you unconditionally." That is what Jesus is saying in this beatitude.

VII. "I WILL MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR YOUR BAD DAYS."

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, . . ." Some of us are war-makers. How many of you husbands know how to make your wife mad? I know how to make my wife mad. I can call her after a while and make her so mad she will throw the phone at me from Denver. She knows how to trigger me. Is this not correct? But don't you also know how to please her? Are you a war-maker or a peacemaker?

In counseling sessions, I have had women say things about their husbands I wouldn't say about Adolf Hitler. That is right. I don't care how sorry the woman is, the husband will just say, "I am no good, I am just an old country boy, and I don't amount to much." I can't get a husband usually to say much, but a woman. . . . Let me tell you women something: If you women get over a coffee cup and try to outdo each other berating your husbands, you are in bad shape. A husband and a wife do not have the right to berate each other in public. Don't be a war-maker. Be a peacemaker. This beatitude says, "I will make allowance for your bad days." Haven't we learned that we all have bad days? There are some days when things just don't go right. There are times when the husband or the wife needs to kind of get away, go shut the door, or whatever. Right? There comes a time when we need the freedom to be ourselves.

CONCLUSION

There is only one conclusion to this lesson: Marriage is still the greatest thing on earth. Nothing is as sweet and as wonderful as your home. I hope you will go home today and have a lovely dinner together. I hope the mother and the daddy will love each other a little bit. You kids, go up and give your mama and daddy a big squeeze. If you have a good home, you are the richest man on earth. If you have a poor home God have mercy on you. I believe in the home with all of my heart. If you do not have a Christian home, you are missing one of the greatest blessings God can give to man.