**September 15, 2019 Matthew 5:3-12**

***Life’s Healing Choices – The Reality Choice***

**Scripture:**

Jesus saw the crowds, went up the mountain; sat down with his disciples; then he taught them, saying:

Matthew 5:3-12 (3)"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (4)"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (5)"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (6)"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (7)"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. (8)"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (9)"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (10)"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11)"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12)Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**Notes:**

*“I don’t understand what I do. For what I* ***want*** *to do I* ***don’t*** *do, but what I* ***hate*** *to do, I* ***do****! …I know that nothing good lives in my sinful nature. I have the* ***desire*** *to do what is good, but I* ***cannot carry it out****." Rom. 7:15-18 NIV*

*Stress Diet Finances Fears Worry*

*Regrets Attractions Relationships Bad habits Addiction*

*Perfectionism Anger Dishonesty Resentment My Overwork*

*Need to control Compulsive thoughts Painful memories*

***THE CAUSE***:***Playing God***

*“In the pride of your heart you say, ‘I am a god…’ But you are just a man and not a god,* ***though you think*** *you are as wise as a god."* Ezekiel 28:2 (NIV)

***1st CHOICE***: *“Blessed are the* ***poor in spirit****, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* Matt. 5:3 (NIV)

**I *ADMIT* I need help; that I’m powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable.**

1. *Humbly* ***admit*** *I need help.*

*“God opposes the proud but gives* ***grace*** *to the humble."* James 4:6 (NIV)

*“You will never succeed in life if you try to* ***hide*** *your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you."* Pr. 28:13 (TEV)

2. *Humbly* ***ask******God*** *for help.*

*“We saw how powerless we were to help ourselves; but that was* ***good****, for then we put everything into the hands of God, who alone could save us, for he can even raise the dead.”* 2 Cor. 1:9 (LB)

*“You're* ***blessed*** *when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule."* Matt. 5:3 (MSG)

3. *Humbly* ***accept*** *help from others.*

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can* ***help*** *him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!”*  Eccl. 4:9-10 (NIV)

*“Admit your faults to* ***one******another*** *and pray for* ***each******other*** *so that you may be healed.”* James 5:16 (LB)

***GROUND RULES***

* 1. *what is said in the group, stays in the group.*
  2. *don't try to fix people.*
  3. *don't minimize other's pain.*
  4. *if numbers allow, guys meet with guys and women meet with women.*
  5. *focus on my own brokenness*.

*“When we were unable to help ourselves, at the moment of our need, Christ died for us…”* Rom. 5:6 (NCV)

**Transcript:**

**ME**

Have you ever played Whack-a-Mole. In Whack-a-Mole these moles pop up out of holes and you take a mallet and knock that mole back to where it came from. As soon as you slam one down another one comes up. Then you slam that one down and two come up. You slam that one down and three come up. It goes on and on and on and you fall further and further behind; you just can't win it. No matter how many you slam down they keep coming back up. And pretty soon you just give up and you walk away.

**WE**

Whack-a-Mole is a metaphor for your life. Just about the time you've got one problem whacked down, another problem pops up. You whack that one down and two more come up. You whack that one down and three more come up. That is life. Whack-a-Mole. Thank you for coming. Have a great week. This is also true of persistent sins. Not just problems but persistent sins and temptations. Just about the time you think you've got victory over that weakness in your life, it pops back up again. Have you noticed this? It just keeps popping back up.

**TRANSITION**

You can go read self-help books that teach you how to whack faster. But that's not what God's Word does. God's Word teaches us how to end the game with sin. And how to unplug it so that the sin and temptation lose its power and they don't keep popping back up.

We are going to begin a series on the beatitudes over the next 8 weeks. Each week we will look at one of the beatitudes and then see how that will help us in our everyday struggles to get ahead of those pesky moles. Stand with me as we read from Mathew 5:3-12

**GOD**

**Scripture**

Jesus saw the crowds, went up the mountain; sat down with his disciples; then he taught them, saying:

Matthew 5:3-12 (3)"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (4)"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. (5)"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. (6)"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (7)"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. (8)"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. (9)"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. (10)"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (11)"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (12)Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

**What**

I want to take a little survey here. Have you ever stayed up late when you knew you needed sleep? Have you ever stayed up late and then slept in church? Have you ever consumed extra calories you knew you shouldn't have? Have you ever made commitments that you couldn't possibly keep? Have you ever felt you ought to exercise but you didn't? Have you ever known that you should be kind and unselfish but instead you were unkind and selfish? Have you ever tried to take control of your life, a circumstance or another person and discovered that you couldn't?

Welcome to the human race. Even Paul struggled with these things; he says *"I don't understand what I do. What I want to do I don't do, but what I hate to do, I end up doing! I know that nothing good lives in my sinful nature. I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."*

A lot of commentators on this verse try to explain this away and say, Paul is talking about his pre-Christian days, before he became a believer, before he had Christ and the Holy Spirit in his life. But that's not at all true. The fact is Paul is writing this in the middle of Romans and all of these verbs are in the present tense, which says I'm doing it now. I'm struggling right now as I write these words.

Let's take a little inventory. On your note sheet is a list of struggles that people encounter; I'd like for you to circle which of these things keep popping up in your life? There may be more than one; which of these keep popping up?

Stress? Fears? Overwork? Attractions I shouldn't have. Addictions? Regrets? Diet? Worry? Bad habits? Anger? Dishonesty? Control issues? Finances? Relationships? Painful memories keep popping up. Perfectionism? Resentment? Compulsive thoughts? If you have circled any of these things you are in the right place. This is the place for people who want to grow.

**What is the cause of all of these problems?** Every problem in your life has the same root cause. **It's playing God.** When I act like I'm God and choose my desires instead of doing what God tells me to do, I'm going to have these problems in my life. Our oldest temptation is the temptation to play God. It goes all the way back to Eden when Adam was tempted to eat the fruit that God says don't eat this. Then Satan comes and says, "If you eat this you'll be like god!" Satan never tempts you to be like himself. He never says if you eat this you'll be like me. Nobody wants to be like him. He says eat this and you'll be your own god. There's a whole philosophy built around it today. It's called the New Age movement, which says you're a god. You're divine. God is you and you are god.

But, you are not a god. The New Age is the oldest lie ever told. You're not a god. If you were, you could solve all your problems. But you're not and you never will be. That is our oldest temptation. It comes from Satan. It's caused by our pride. Ezekiel points this out when he says to the king of Tyre *"In the pride of your heart you say, 'I am a god.' But you are just a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god."*

When do you think you're as wise as God? When God tells you to do something and you don't do it? "I know God says not to do this, but I'm going to do it anyway. I know God says don't do that, but I'm going to do it anyway. I know what will make me happy more than God does. I know God says no sex outside of marriage but I'm going to do what I want to do. I know God says tithe but I'm going to do what I want to do. I know God says…" Every time God tells you to do something and you don't do it, guess what? You are playing God. You're saying I actually know what will make me happy more than God does.

That is the source of all your problems. It is the root. The Bible says in Proverbs 29:23 *"Pride ruins people."* Have you ever realized what is the common denominator in all your bad relationships? The common denominator in every one of your bad relationships is you! That's kind of obvious. Everything else is different about it but you are the common denominator. You are your own worst enemy. You cause yourself the most problems. Today you're going to understand that this is the problem we have to deal with first.

What is the cure? The cure is what we're going to look at for the next eight weeks. We're going to look at the eight Beatitudes of Jesus, which are the first eight statements in the most famous sermon, ever gave. It's called the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus starts the Sermon on the Mount by saying, "I'm going to tell you eight ways to be blessed. You'll be blessed if you do this… You'll be blessed if you do this… " eight statements. We call them the Beatitudes.

What in the world is a blessing? The word "blessing" or "bless" literally is the word in Greek *makarismos*. *Makarismos* is a poetic verb, which means in Greek "happy." To be blessed means to be happy. That's all it means.

So Jesus in his most famous Sermon on the Mount starts off by saying, I want to tell you eight ways to be happy. He says the way to be happy is not what the world tells you. If there was anything more important than this Jesus would have done it and dealt with it.

**The first Beatitude is the first healing choice** for getting rid of your habits and your hurts and your hang-ups that mess up your life. Matthew 5:3, the first Beatitude ***"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."***

Jesus is saying nobody gets into heaven pridefully. It's all by grace. *"Not of works, lest any man should boast."* What does it mean to be poor in spirit? That’s what we will look at today. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

First, circle the phrase "in spirit." He's not talking about physical poverty. There is no blessing in being poor physically. Jesus is talking about spiritual poverty - recognizing my sinfulness, recognizing my helplessness, recognizing my hopelessness. I love the God's Word translation of this verse. It says, *"Blessed are those who recognize that they are spiritually helpless."* That's what he's talking about - spiritually helpless.

In Celebrate Recovery this is the first statement, which perfectly describes what it means to be poor in spirit; I admit I need help; I'm powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing; and my life is unmanageable. That is what it means to be poor in spirit. God says if you develop that attitude, that I admit that I am powerless, that I need help, that I can't control and manage everything in my life but I need God's help, he says, then you will be blessed. It's the first step to being blessed, to being happy.

**So What**

Let's look at how we can develop that attitude. It's not about being physically poor, it's about being spiritually poor. They don't call them *be* attitudes for nothing. This is the first attitude you need to *be*. You need to be poor in spirit. How do I become poor in spirit? The Bible teaches us three ways.

**1. First, to be poor in spirit I must humbly admit I need help.**

I've got to face the truth about me. I've got to stop living in denial. That's why we call this the reality choice. Jesus said, *"The truth will set you free."* So I have to face the truth about me. But the truth is; we don’t like the truth. You can't handle the truth! You *love* the truth about everybody else. But you hate the truth about you. We avoid it and we fake it, the truth is painful. We'd rather live phony lives. It’s a lot safer to not handle the truth about me because the truth makes me miserable when I realize what needs changing in my life, before it can set me free. So I humbly admit that I need help. That's being honest.

The good news is your habits and your hurts and your hang-ups can be healed. The bad news is it takes humility. You've got to humble yourself and swallow your pride. James says this *"God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble."* What is grace? Grace is the power you need to change. In the next eight weeks we are going to talk about ways in which change can take place; but, it's not going to happen by will power. Will power doesn't work. How many diets have you started? How many exercise programs have you started? Will power does not work! ‘Cause you get tired. Grace is the power you need to change.

How do you get grace? Through humility. *"God opposes the proud but he gives grace to the humble."* What does that mean? There are some facts you need to admit; things you need to admit about yourself if God's going to bless your life.

* The first thing you need to admit is this: I am broken.

We live in a broken world and in it nothing works perfectly. The weather, the economy, our relationships, our marriages; they don't work perfectly. Everything is broken. Even your DNA is broken. God never intended for there to be deformities in the world. Everything is broken. You can't expect two broken people to get married and have a perfect marriage. It ain't gonna happen! It's going to be broken too because you can only work with what you've got.

The Bible says this in Romans 8:20 *"Creation is confused."* It's frustrated. It's groaning. Everybody's confused today - what am I supposed to be, what am I supposed to do… We've got people trying to be other people. We've got older people trying to be younger people. Younger people trying to be older people. Women trying to be men, men trying to be women. We've got races trying to be different races. I want my hair to be like *that* race or *that* race.

Be who God made you to be. Our identities even are confused. Why? Because we are in a broken world. You've been broken by nature and you've been broken by nurture. You've been broken by sins you've done and you've been broken by sins done to you. You've been broken by choices and you have been broken by circumstances. The fact is we're all in the same boat. Nobody is perfect. I'm broken. That takes humility to admit.

* I need to admit that my secrets make me sick.

David says in Psalm 32, *"When I refused to confess my sins I was weak and miserable and I groaned all day long. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally I confessed my sins to you and I stopped trying to hide them all and you forgave me and all my guilt is gone."* He said when I held in all these secrets I got sick. It's not so much what you eat; it's what's eating you. If you're tired and frustrated all the time, and you've got all these problems, What are you hiding? My secrets make me sick. When I get them out, when I'm honest and I'm open and humble I get a whole lot better. Hiding never works. When you hide a sin it festers and gets worse. When you hide a fear it intensifies and the fear gets worse and worse and worse. When you hide a hurt, a memory, it imprints it on your mind and it gets stronger and stronger and stronger. Hiding a hurt, a sin, a fear never works. It only intensifies it in your life. What are you pretending isn't a problem?

Here's another thing you need to be honest about.

* I must admit it to defeat it.

I can't work on the sins in my life until I admit the sins in my life. I must admit it to defeat it. Proverbs 28:13 in the message says, “You can't whitewash your sins and get by with it; you find mercy by admitting and leaving them.” I can't defeat it until I admit it. We waste an enormous amount of energy hiding our hurts, our faults, our hang-ups. All that energy you use to pretend that you're somebody that you're not and to hide your weaknesses and your faults from other people, it drains your life and it's why you're tired all the time. If you didn't have to hide anything you'd have a whole lot more energy for the good stuff.

* Another thing you need to be honest about: It's my pride and fear that keep me stuck.

This problem is as old as time. Genesis 3 Adam in the Garden of Eden right after he sins says *"I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."* What's the first fear? The fear of exposure. That somebody's going to find out what I'm really like on the inside.  *P*eople have been hiding and hurling ever since. We hide our own sins and we hurl at everybody else's.

You go over to Matthew 25, the parable of the talents. The guy who had the one talent says, *"I was afraid so I hid my talent."* A lot of people are doing that. It is pride and fear; pride, I don't want anybody to know my weaknesses; and fear, I'm scared to death of my weaknesses. That keeps us from getting well, from getting healthy, from getting whole, from growing, from getting unstuck.

There was a very popular book written in the 1970s called I’m Ok - You’re Ok. Anybody remember it? The truth is I'm not ok, you're not ok, but that's ok because God will make me ok. That's what Jesus came to do.

What's not ok is your refusal to admit that you're not ok. We need each other and we need God's grace. Some think, "I don't need recovery because I’m not that bad." We think, only the really bad people need recovery.” There's stuff in you, you don't like. Nobody's more broken than you and you're not more broken than anybody else. We're all in the same boat. You're as broken as everybody else and depravity is total.

Because of pride and fear we don't want to be honest about this. We don't admit our faults. We don't want to admit our fears. We try to fix ourselves. Last week Pastor Steve shared Jeremiah 2:13 *"My people have committed two sins:* [One] *They have forsaken me, the spring of living water* [And two] *they have dug their own broken wells, their own broken cisterns that can't hold water."* Not only do we reject God, we make our own plan to fix ourselves. And it doesn't hold water.

It is amazing all the things that we try to do to get our life together instead of leaning on God? Some try astrology, aromatherapy, crystals, palm readers, acupuncture. We go for fads and therapies, conferences and cults, tapes and motivational seminars, we read books and try everything *except* God. We build our own wells and the wells are cracked and won't hold water. You can't solve a spiritual problem with a physical substance. Whether it's a pill or a drug or alcohol or television or pornography or anything else. It isn't going to relieve your pain ultimately. You cannot solve your spiritual problem with a physical substance.

So the first thing I have to do if I'm going to be poor in spirit is I must humbly admit I need help.

**2. There's a second thing I need to do. I need to humbly ask God for help.**

I admit I need help, then I ask God for it. I move from confession to petition - I need help! I'm asking God for help.

In 2 Corinthians 1:9 Paul says this, *"We despaired of even life itself."* Did you know at one point Paul said I was ready to kick the bucket. I was so depressed, I was so discouraged, I was ready to give up on life. Then he says in this verse *"We saw how powerless we were to help ourselves;* [That's step one - poor in spirit. I don't have the power to change.] *but that was good,* [why would it be good to admit my helplessness and powerlessness?] *for then we put everything into the hands of God,* [You don't know God is all you need until God's all you've got. For then we put everything into the hands of God] *who alone could save us, for he can even raise the dead."*

If God can raise a dead person he can rejuvenate a career. If God can raise a dead person he can raise a dead dream. If God can raise a dead person he can restore the love and romance in your marriage. God can do miracles. Anybody can bring good out of good. God can bring good out of bad. So we ask God for help. Notice on that verse it says, "We couldn’t help ourselves; we put everything in the hands of God." Circle the word "everything." This is total surrender. It's not partial surrender like "Ok, my finances are in a mess so I'm going to give God my finances." No, you've got to give him all of your life. Have you ever come to that point in your life where you say, Everything in my life, I put it all in your hands.

I beg you as a friend and pastor who loves you, don't wait until you hit rock bottom. Sometimes we're so stubborn, God has to lay us flat on our back to make us look up to him. There’s an easy way to change; it is to see the light. And there is a hard way; that is to feel the pain. The problem is most of us rarely change until our fear of change is exceeded by the pain. Then we go "Oh, I've got to get help!" Don't get to the place, come to God and ask him for his help before things become out of your control. I love The Message paraphrase of this first Beatitude. Matthew 5:3 *"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope.* [Congratulations!] *With less of you there's more of God and his rule."*

I admit I need help, I ask God for help. Then there's a third thing if I really want to be poor in spirit, and this is the hardest step of all for many people.

**3. I must humbly accept help from other people.**

This is the third way God wired us; that we don't get well by ourselves. You know that problem you'd like to get rid of in your life? That temptation? That defect, that fault, that fear, that worry, that loneliness, that whatever is in your life that messes you up? You're never going to get rid of it on your own. If you could you would but you can't so you won't. You're only going to get well when you're honest with others. Not just God but with others.

You say, "I don't want to do that. Why should I do that?" It humbles you and God gives grace to the humble. It is your pride that keeps you stuck.

The Bible says this in Ecclesiastes 4:9 *"Two are better than one,* [talking about people] *because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up.* [That's called recovery.] *But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up."*

God wired us that we need each other. Fifty-eight times in the New Testament the phrase "one another" is used-- love one another, care for one another, help one another, encourage one another, pray for one another, support one another, counsel one another. We are to help each other out. That's why we have church. We are to help each other out. You were never meant to go through life as a Lone Ranger. You were never meant to go through it on your own. You were never meant to face your problems or your sins by yourself. We need each other. We have a longing for belonging. We're not just believers, we're belongers. We're to help each other out.

The fact is we need each other to be healthy. If you don't have anybody in your life that you can be totally, brutally honest with, I pity you because you're not healthy. God wired us in such a way that we only get well in community. That's why we have small groups. We only grow in community. When you're going through a tough time you need other people around you.

Did you know that the Bible says that when a guy's going through a tough time and he's so upset he can't even believe in God; he still deserves to have friends? God says even when people don't believe in me, they still deserve to have friends who hang in there with them. Job 6:14 *"A despairing man* [somebody who's given up on his career, his marriage, his life, whatever, a despairing person] *should have the devotion of his friends even though he forsakes the fear of the almighty."* God says that's real friendship. And he says pity the person who hasn't ever gotten into a group, gotten close to somebody, close enough to do that, to help each other out.

This is why we have small groups, in this church. It's why we insist that every member of this church be in a small group Bible study. It's not enough to just come and sit and soak. You need to get in a group where people can know you and help you on a personal basis when the tough times come; and when you can help other people when their tough times come.

If all you do is come to church on Sunday you get the word once a week. That would be like eating a banquet once a week and fasting for the next six days. What would that do to your digestive system? You wouldn't be very healthy if all you did was get FED once a week and the rest of the week you fasted. You need to be FED daily throughout the week. When you go to a small group Bible study you get FED, Fellowship, Discipleship, and evangelism; a boost from the Word of God. That nourishes and gives you strength.

A friend has an iPhone, that the battery went dead; so he plugged it into his Macbook. He said he plugged the Iphone into his Macbook to recharge it but it wasn't charging. He couldn't figure out why so he opened up the Macbook and realized that it only gets power when the book is open. I only get the power when the book is open. When you sit in a Bible study with others, you get the power. It doesn’t matter where it happens but the book must be opened for you to get the power.

This next verse is one of the most important verses for becoming like Christ and getting over your habits and hang-ups. James 5:16 *"Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* Circle the word "healed." And circle the words "admit" and "pray" and "each other" and draw a line between them. If you want to be healed in your life that's the key. Admit your faults to one another and pray for each other so you may be healed. When you do this, there's this sigh of relief. "Why didn't I do that a long time ago?" There is relief and there is healing just in sharing. Why? Because the moment you do that you humble yourself and God gives grace to the humble. You are no longer struggling to keep the secret, you have surrendered to God and put your fears aside. Sharing that fear, sharing that fault, sharing that difficulty, revealing your feelings is the beginning of healing.

This is the hardest step for some because it really hits your pride. In other words "I don't mind telling God about my sin, but I'm not about to tell anybody else. My stomach just starts churning even thinking about it. God already knows about my sin, about my problem, about my fear. But I'm not about to tell anybody else." God has wired us in a way that we need each other to grow.Let me be real clear about this. If all you want to do is be forgiven, tell God. But if you want to be healed, you've got to tell other people. You don't have to tell everybody. You only need to tell one or two other people that you trust; who are going to love you unconditionally.

Our biggest hurdle to holiness is the desire to look good. We want to look good to other people so we don't tell anybody about what's going on in our life. But you know the cool thing? I've been in this church from birth till today; many know my history, my faults and struggles, you know my hardships. Many of you know me warts and all. I don't have to pretend I've got it all together. I can share fears and faults and sins and I know you will pray for me; even without the details, if you know I need your prayers, you will pray. Everybody needs a place like that. this is a place like that. I want you to have relief and release and freedom. But you're going to have to deal with this fear of honesty that you've got in your life. Like, nobody would understand what I'm going through. You aren’t the first to struggle with your own sins, and you will most likely not be the last. There are **three fears Satan uses to keeps you stuck. Three fears.**

* **The first fear that Satan keeps you stuck in a rut with is the fear of your own emotions**.

That's a fear. It's a fear of if I deal with this issue, that memory, that event, that sin, that abuse, that accident, that hurt, that evil, wicked, mean, bad and nasty thing; if I actually face it I will not be able to handle my emotions. I won't be able to handle the grief. I won't be able to handle the shame. I won't be able to handle my own emotions. In fact I may just go crazy.

If you've ever felt, I'm going out of my mind, I'm going crazy - relax. You need to understand two things. Number one, every human being has had that fear. So it's not a big deal. And two, the second thing they say is only rational people have that fear. So you're not crazy. Take a deep breath!

Let me let you in on a little secret. Crazy people aren't afraid of being crazy. So the very fact that you're afraid "I might go crazy" means you ain't doin' it. I want everybody to smile right now. Look at the person next to you and say I'm broken but I'm not crazy. No, we're not crazy. We are broken. But that's ok. We're all in the same boat. And just knowing we're all in it together means I can quit pretending.

* **There's the second fear you have and that's the fear of the reactions of others**.

I'm afraid to be honest because you might reject me. You might dismiss me. You might think I'm less of a Christian. You might think I'm evil. You might abandon me and I've been there. So I'm afraid of your rejection. I'm afraid of your disapproval. I'm afraid that you'll try to fix me.

You need to get over that fear.

* **There's another fear that people have about being honest and that's the fear that being honest is useless.**

What's the point of it? Why tell anybody else about my struggles? Been there done that; it didn't help. No, you didn't go there. You haven't ever really been totally honest, because if you had you'd already be released. The fact is God says, *"Confess your faults one to another whereby you will be healed."* That is a promise and God is not a liar. Admit your faults to each other. The truth is God has promised to help.

This week our small group Bible studies in the coffee shop are going to start studying the Beatitudes for the next eight weeks together. I want to give you a few ground rules up front. But before I do let me explain why we do what we do. The reason we are doing this is because it's the way to help you grow fast.

According to a study we forget 90-95%t of everything we hear within seventy-two hours. That depresses me as a pastor; it means by Wednesday you're going to forget everything I've told you today except five percent. We have outlines because if you write it down it actually helps you remember it longer. If you're not taking any notes it's going in one ear and right out the other.

So if you really want to get over your habits, hurts and hang-ups and if you want to be spiritually mature you have to do more than listen to sermons. We learn in different ways. Some people learn by hearing, some through seeing. Some people like to talk about it, others learn by doing. So, for the next 8 weeks with this topic, Getting over Habits, Hurts and Hang-ups, we will reinforce it five ways. We hear it, we read it, we study it, we memorize it, we do it, we practice it, we talk about it; all these different things. That drives the nail in deeper than if we just heard sermons.

You're going to hear me preach and teach on Sunday mornings. Then if you are a reader, you can find a copy of the book, Life's Healing Choices and read it. Our coffee shop Sunday school class is going to discuss the sermon. The Wednesday evening small group is going to watch a series of eight Bible studies which are going to give you additional material, and discuss it. I am also going to ask you to memorize a verse if you choose to do so. This week it's *"Blessed are the poor in spirit,*  [That's not very hard.] *for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* Then I am asking you to begin living out what you learn*.*

So you hear it, read it, memorize it, do it. All that will help you to grow. But, if all you do is come to church and listen to the sermons for the next eight weeks you're not going to change much. You might get a few ideas but you're not going to change. So what I want you to do is get in a group.

Let me give you ground rules for your small group. During this next eight weeks - ground rules. I'll say them real quick and then we'll close.

1. One, ***what is said in the group, stays in the group***. Kind of like Vegas. What is said in the group stays in the group. Confidentiality is absolutely essential. If somebody shares with you, you don't go out and put it on Facebook.
2. Two, ***don't try to fix people***. That's not your job. That's not what groups are all about - fix each other. We just support and have listening ears. You don't try to fix other people. Every time you're working on fixing other people you're not thinking about your needs and what you need to be working on.
3. Three, ***don't minimize other's pain***. We don't know how to handle pain of other people, when somebody in your group is in pain and they share a hurt, a habit or a hang-up, here's what you do. You look at them in love, you nod and you shut up. If you say anything it's like, "That's got to hurt! That's got to be tough!" They don't need your advice. They don't need you to fix them. This is pain they've carried for many years and it's not going to be fixed with you saying, "All things work together for good." No. You just nod and listen and empathize. You listen with your ears not your mouth. You don't minimize pain.
4. Four in the ground rules, during the next eight weeks - and this is different. We don't do this normally – if the numbers allow it, I would like the ***guys to meet with guys*** ***and*** ***women to meet with women***. If you're in a mixed small group, here's what you do. You meet together as the whole group and watch the video study together. Then when it's time for discussion, guys can go in a different room and the ladies stay and each group can talk. There are just some things guys aren't going to say in front of women. And there are just some things women aren't going to say in front of guys. you just go for the little short discussion time into different groups. It allows us to be more open and more honest. Guys meeting with guys and women meeting with women.
5. And the final thing is ***focus on my own brokenness***. Not everybody else, but on my own brokenness. You know that one of the principles of Saddleback Church is it's not about you. It's the opening sentence of The Purpose Driven Life. It's not about you. I'm going to tell you the exact opposite right now. During this next eight weeks, it's all about you. It's not about the problems other people are having. It's about you. If you spend all your time trying to fix somebody else you're not going to be able to work on you. You're going to miss the importance and the benefit and the healing of this. So I'm telling you for the next eight weeks it's all about you in that group. You should not be thinking, how do I help that person. But you should be thinking about, what does this say about me? And what does this help me see in my own life?

My prayer is that this is going to be a life changing eight weeks. But Jesus' Beatitudes have nothing to offer you unless you've accepted Jesus and have faith in him.

*"When we were unable to help ourselves,* [which is right now] *at the moment of our need,* [which is right now] *Christ died for us."* It's the cross. Jesus came to give you grace and grace is the power to change. You've got to accept Christ into your life.

You may be thinking, my problem isn't that bad. Question: ***how bad does it have to get before you ask for help***?

**Prayer**:

What's unhealthy or out of balance in your life? What needs changing? I want to invite you right now to join the rest of us as we take these eight steps to getting healthy again. Would you take the first step today? It may be the hardest one. It means being honest and facing up to an issue that you've been afraid to face for a long, long time. I want to pray for you then you can follow me in a prayer.

Father, because not one of us is perfect, we all have areas in our lives that are unhealthy and out of balance. Some of these areas, Lord, are so painful that we can hardly even stand to think about them. I know, Lord, there are people here today who have struggled with shame and guilt and secrets and depression and low self-esteem. I know, Lord, there are others here that are in a marriage that's stuck or it's cold, grown cold and it's dying. Maybe they're even separated right now. There are many people here struggling with a habit, a secret sin, a hurt, and a fear of being out of control or the fear that they're losing their mind, going crazy. Lord, give them the courage to take the first step to health and help right now.

Now you pray. In your mind say, Dear God, I want to take the first step to getting healthy again today. I realize that I am not God. But I have often acted like I was. I've tried to control things. I'm sorry. I have done things that you've told me not to do. And I've not done things you've told me to do. I'm not going to run any more. Today I want to be poor in spirit. First, I humbly admit that I need your help. I don't want to hide my hurts or sins any more. I know that I'm helpless to control my tendency to do the wrong things that are unhealthy for me. I ask you to take the pieces of my unmanageable life and begin the process. I'm asking for help. Even more than that Lord, I'm asking that you give me the courage to accept help from others. I don't want to just be forgiven. I want to be healed. I want to get this behind me so that the rest of my life can be the best of my life. I know that Satan is going to throw all kinds of fears at me the next eight weeks. But help me to stick with this and change me. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.