



How to Maximize Your Influence on The Hill



In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount He states, ***"You are the salt of the earth; ... You are the light of the world."*** (Matthew 5:13–14). Often, well-meaning believers invoke this passage as a means of encouragement and prodding others to step up to the plate and affect the world.

In this study, I desire to provide you with a greater understanding of the Greek verb that Jesus uses. ***"You are"*** is not an imperative command; it is an indicative verb. This distinction is very important and necessary to make as we seek to better understand what the Bible means. Such precision leads to proper, God-glorifying application to one's life.

My prayer is that the meaning of this passage will become increasingly clear as you study what follows.

Read on, my friend.

Ralph Drollinger

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PUBLIC SERVANT
ENDORSEMENT

Mike Rounds

U.S. Senator, South Dakota



Sen. Mike Rounds addressed CapMin ministry leaders at the recent International Training Conference in Washington, D.C. He said,

“The reason I wanted to come today is to share how important what you do is as far as making a difference. George Washington was our first president and probably our greatest general. He was a leader of men, he saw our nation not as a kingdom, but as a true democracy. In the Washington monument is a quote from a letter he wrote on Oct 7, 1785, just at the beginning of the founding of our nation. He wrote, ‘My first wish is to see the whole world in peace, and the inhabitants of it as one band of brothers striving for who

Continued on page 4

I. INTRODUCTION

In the three-chapter Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Jesus denounces the legalism of the Pharisees. In contradistinctive juxtaposed alliteration, the thesis of the sermon is this: a person cannot be saved by keeping the law of Moses.

In that the Pharisees fashioned themselves as the astute spiritual experts of Israel, habitually piling on extrabiblical commands (with their accompanying odious stench of superiority), Jesus’ objective in the three-chapter sermon is to pop their bubble. He begins His sermon with pithy, short statements intended to contrast their posturing. These beatitudes¹ are all direct opposites to pharisaical arrogance and ideology. In other words, if I may paraphrase what Jesus is saying, “You think your ways will change the world? You’ve got it backward!”

That summation of Jesus’ sermon should give a hint as to how these chapters relate to the topic of this Bible study: *How to Maximize Your Influence on the Hill*. By the time a believer arrives at Jesus’ conclusion in the Beatitudes (vv. 13–14, point V. in this outline) the formula for an effective, God-honoring life that impacts the world has been laid. The two “*You are*” statements also serve as apt summaries of the aforementioned—indicative of the prior “beatitudinal” attitudes in action! Conversely,

Isolating Jesus’ salt-and-light statements and using them as if He were commanding His followers to be salt and light with no reference or consideration to what precedes the summary statements is to miss the crux of the passage.

It is to state the summations without the method. Taking such license would be like commanding a staff member to achieve a certain function without instruction. In order to be effective in their vocations, speech writers must first know how to write, webmasters must first know HTML coding, and schedulers must first know Microsoft Office. In a similar fashion, the public servant must first know what will make him into a preserver and an illuminator (*salt and light*, respectively) while serving in office. This point is both simple yet profound: Jesus’ summation of being *salt and light* is a codification of all He has previously taught. The preceding seven beatitudes need be thoroughly examined and understood in order to accomplish this goal. The following insights are to aid in maximizing one’s influence on the Hill.

II. SEVEN REQUIRED ATTITUDES (5:1–9)

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying, ... (v. 1).

During the time of Christ, four prevalent religionists focused on matters other than what Jesus mentions in this passage: an emphasis on the inner man, one’s attitudes. Notice these four groups and think about their parallels to today:

The Religionists of Jesus’ Day

→ The **PHARISEES** insisted on a fastidious adherence to the mosaic law (and all that they had added).



- The **SADDUCEES** were akin to theological liberalism of today. They discounted the supernatural, conforming everything to within their reasoning abilities.
- The **ESSENES** were ascetics, believing in dualism, i.e., the material world being evil and to be avoided.
- The **ZEALOTS** believed the end game of all religion was political activism. Theirs was a call to take up arms against Rome.

This list contains the expanded competitive theological landscape wherein Jesus spoke the following seven attitudinal descriptors that are *blessed*: pleasing to self, God, and others. In studying what follows, pay special note to the progression and how each one builds on the former: there is a definite accumulation of thought here. That's to say the Beatitudes which follow are not a buckshot scattering of somewhat unrelated nice sayings.

A. IF YOU BREAK OVER PERSONAL SIN

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (v. 3).

True spirituality in God's sight and the first necessary component for long-lasting influence is humility. The Greek word Matthew selects and is translated into English as *poor* (*ptochos*) was used in association with a beggar, connoting the idea of material *poverty*. In this verse, Jesus uses the word in a spiritual context: being spiritually *poor*, i.e., one who is begging God for his salvation. Foundational to a person's relationship to self, God, and others is the need for him to

come to grips with his abject spiritual poverty—his inner realization of his lost hopelessness apart from God's intervention. Fundamental to effective influence is attribution to God (versus self) and His divine enablement. This understanding stands in opposition to the person who possesses a spirit of being self-strong—the seedbed of personal pride.

Paul reflects on this attitude in Philippians 3:7–9 when he describes his personal righteousness in comparison to God's as *rubbish*. Isaiah 64:6 puts it this way: *And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment*. Summarily, counter-intuitively, worthiness in this world cannot be attained without a sense of personal unworthiness. One need only take his eyes off of self and *regard one another as more important* (Philippians 2:3). Without our having genuine *humility* others will rightfully conclude that we believe, “it's all about me,” which vastly diminishes one's influence. Such was the wrap on the Pharisees. The *poor in spirit* (akin to being repentant) are *blessed* because, after taking personal inventory, they've concluded a need to depend on God for their salvation. Jesus concludes, *theirs is the kingdom of heaven*.

B. IF YOU MOURN OVER PERSONAL SIN

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (v. 4).

The contextual progression of thought pertaining to *mourning* (*pentheo*) has to do with sorrowfulness over personal sin. Written in the present participle, this word embodies an outlook of continuous action—reflective not only of personal repentance leading to salvation, but also an ongoing attitude of *nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh* (Romans 7:18). The person who is *poor in spirit* realizes his personal bankruptcy, which necessi-

VERSE OF THE WEEK



Matthew 5:13–16

*“You are the salt of the earth ...
You are the light of the world ...
Let your light shine.”*



Illumination of God's ways is normative behavior for Christ's ambassadors.





Continued from page 2



should contribute most to the happiness of mankind.’ What a powerful message. That doesn’t come from human intellect that comes from the heart, that comes from a divine message that is for us today, how do you take care of your brothers? That’s our challenge. That’s our message and you get the opportunity to share with other individuals who make laws, you get to remind them of what is most important in life. What a calling!”



tates personal *mourning*, grief, and agony over his plight before a holy and all-righteous God. James underscores this perspective on self when he writes: *Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you* (4:9–10). Per this passage, *mourning*, i.e., longing for a life free from sin and to be with our Maker (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:2, 8), in turn, implores God’s attention and empowerment: *for they shall be comforted*.

Contrary to the ways of the Pharisees, the emptying of self permits the filling of God.

For when I am weak, then I am strong is the similar counter-intuitive paradoxical declaration of 2 Corinthians 12:10. It is spiritual bankruptcy, being *poor in spirit*, that leads to continual personal *mourning*. That *mourning* in turn facilitates Jesus’ conclusion of this Beatitude: *comforted* (*parakaleo*, which means “to call alongside”) (cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3). The same word is used elsewhere for the Holy Spirit, which can be translated “Helper.” To paraphrase, *Blessed* are those who *mourn* for they shall ensure to themselves the help of God. Do you desire greater influence on the Hill? Here is the biblical prescription: sober up to your abject personal spiritual *poverty*. Once you realize you’re not so great, you position yourself for effective service; it is at this point, God aids you.

Whereas the first two Beatitudes focus on a person’s proper assessment of self, the following two pertain to a proper assessment of oneself to God.

C. IF YOU DESIRE GOD’S APPROVAL

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth” (v. 5).

If being *poor in spirit* and *mourning* over sin means a believer has forsaken personal merit in exchange for the economy of God’s gracious impartation, then it follows that he will possess a humble, *gentle* spirit in view of the holiness of God.

Gentleness (also translated in other English Bibles as “meekness”) has as its object the awe and respect of God. It means not self-strong. The Greek word for *gentleness* (*praos*) carries the idea of focusing on the holiness of God. Contextually then, this beatitude is not so much about being *gentle* with others; rather, its focus centers on being humbled by and in the presence of the reality of who God is! I am meek when I compare my sinfulness to God’s holiness. In contrast the Pharisees were full of hubris and depending on their personal merit whereas the redeemed are full of meekness in awe of God’s majesty and holiness.

Resultant is the fact that *they shall inherit the earth*. In terms of being *salt and light* today, the existence of “not being self-strong” and being desirous of God’s approval is an indispensable component of one’s possessing an inherited-from-God influence on the Hill.

D. IF YOU SEEK AFTER GOD’S WAYS

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (v. 6).

It follows that after having given himself a vote of no-confidence, a believer will be awestruck, i.e. meek in view of His holi-



ness, and also *hunger and thirst* after His *righteousness*. Voiding self, he desires to be filled with God's ways! Show me a Member who *hungers* for God's *righteousness*, and I will show you a Member who is effectuating change in society; however, the inverse is also true.

Hungering and *thirsting* connote a strong passion in the soul. Herein is proper ambition: not zeal to be famous or to create a brand, but first directed to know God! The more a person crucifies and empties self (Galatians 2:20, the first two beatitudes), the more he will desire and have the ability to be filled with God's ways. One cannot grab hold of God's pearls until he releases the pop beads of self.

Such is the means of ultimate *satisfaction* in this life, and such are the foundational ingredients of those who will be effective agents of preservation and illumination in culture.

To be effective in influencing others in a positive way, the four prerequisites must be in place.

E. IF YOU HELP OTHERS

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (v. 7).

Mercy (*eleemon*, from which the English word *eleemosynary* is derived) means "beneficial or charitable." It follows that the person who has received much *mercy* via the pardon of sin on the cross should, in his realization, display *mercy* or charity to others.

The person who is
despondent over his
sin resulting in a
whole-hearted
pursuit of God, will

show mercies to his fellow man.

Mercy carries the idea of "not giving a person that which he deserves." God is *merciful* to the sinner in this way; He pardons the sinner. In this same way, the "beatitudinal" believer displays *mercy* toward his fellow man. Such teachings by Jesus flew in the face of the smug Pharisees who were condescending and void of *mercy* toward those who failed to measure up to their standards. The amount of influence a Member has on the Hill will be largely calculated by his willingness, attempts, and successes to *personally bless* the lives of others.

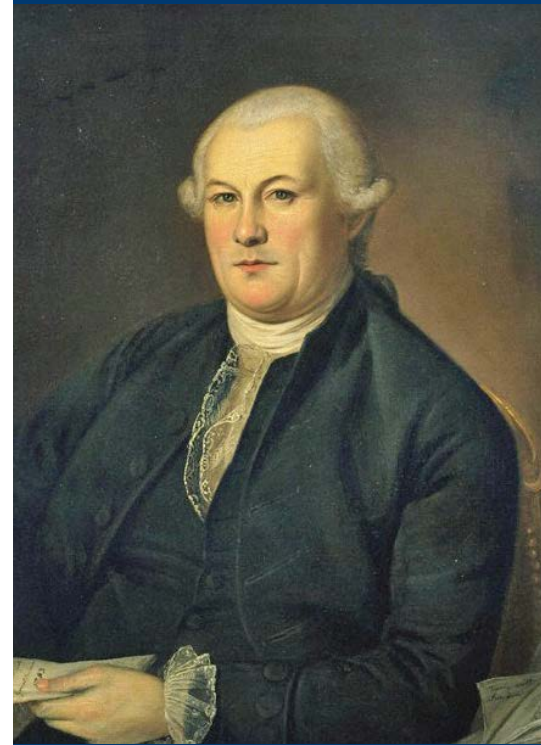
States Jesus, the specific result of a person's characteristic *mercifulness* is that *he will receive mercy*. James 2:13 states this same promise in an opposite fashion: *For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy* (cf. Matthew 6:14–15). This is not to suggest that people gain salvation by being *merciful*; such is accomplished not by personal merit, but only by God's grace through trust in Christ. Rather, the idea is this: the degree to which the believer is *merciful* to his or her fellow man is the degree to which God is *merciful* to him in daily living. What goes around comes around. The idea is one of sowing and reaping: the one who sows *mercy* will reap *mercy*.

F. IF YOU ARE GENUINE WITH OTHERS

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (v. 8).

When Jesus spoke these words in the Sermon on the Mount, Israel was in desperate straits. With a ripe history of disobedience to God, they found themselves under the control of an occupying foreign country (Rome) and an economy in shambles. They were under the reli-

Elias Boudinot



"... without the almighty power of the Spirit of God enlightening your mind, subduing your will, and continually drawing you to Himself, you can do nothing ..."

— Elias Boudinot, President of Congress, signed the Peace Treaty to end the American Revolution, first attorney admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court Bar, framer of the Bill of Rights, Director of the U.S. Mint.

Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation* (Philadelphia: Asbury Dickins, 1801), xii–xiv, from the prefatory remarks to his daughter, Susan, on October 30, 1782; see also *Letters of the Delegates to Congress: 1774–1789*, Paul H. Smith, editor (Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress, 1992), Vol. XIX, 325, from a letter of Elias Boudinot to his daughter, Susan Boudinot, on October 30, 1782; see also, Elias Boudinot, *The Life Public Services, Addresses, and Letters of Elias Boudinot* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1896), Vol. I, 260–262.



John Adams



“I Pray Heaven to Bestow The Best of Blessing on THIS HOUSE, and on ALL that shall hereafter Inhabit it. May none but Honest and Wise Men ever rule under This Roof!”

— John Adams, second President of the United States, signer of the Declaration of Independence, judge, diplomat, one of two signers of the Bill of Rights.

John Adams, *letter to Abigail Adams*, November 2, 1800.



gious misguidance of the religionists mentioned in the introduction. In that light, Jesus’ stating verse 8 must have been liberating for those to whom He preached. The Pharisees in particular were not *pure in heart*, but pious in *heart* toward their fellow man. Theirs was a guilt-trip religion of never-ending proportions.

The Progression of the Seven Beatitudes

The first two relate to a person’s proper relationship to self; these next two relate to his proper relationship to God. Now notice the following three: the stage is set for a proper relationship to others. Herein is the progression of thought, i.e., Jesus’ path to effective influence.

Given these insights and the contextual progression of the passage, Jesus was proclaiming in a positive way, “Don’t be pious toward your fellow man!” *Pure* (*katharos*) means “cleansing from dirt and contamination.” The Greek word is the basis for the English word *catharsis*, i.e., the purgation (“to purge, evacuate of the emotions”). To be *pure in heart* means to be real in every way—especially emotionally! Don’t coat your relationships with a thick morass of pharisaical super-spirituality as though you are perfect when everyone including yourself knows that you are not! Be authentic with others! The person who truthfully communicates a sense of transparency regarding personal brokenness over sin, but who is nonetheless passionate toward God and manifestly loving vis-à-vis others, is most attractive and influential in life! Genuine people

become the greatest preservative and illuminative people in a nation. This is the kind of person others want to be around—versus phony spiritual know-it-alls with plastic spirituality—who act like they have it all together! Ugh!

The result is intimacy with God: *they shall see God*. This phrase is in the future indicative tense and in the middle voice, which means they shall be continuously seeing God for themselves. Herein then in the respective order of the Beatitudes is intimacy and *blessing* with self, God, and others. What more could anyone desire?

G. IF YOU RECONCILE OTHERS TO GOD

“*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*” (v. 9).

The third aspect of personal relationship skills listed in the progression of the Beatitudes is that of being a messenger of *peace* to others. In that the believer himself has made *peace* with God, such is the ambassador of God’s *peace* to and for others. Every believer is an evangelist, sharing God’s salvation with others: he is a *peacemaker* in the vertical sense. Again, note the progression: within the confines of horizontal relationships where the believer helps and is genuine comes the ability to effectively share Christ. This ability represents the ultimate in cultural preservation and illumination, reconciling people to God in an eternal sense.

The Greek word used in this verse for *sons* (*huios*) “expresses the dignity and honor of a child to his or her parents.” Synonymous with being an ambassador for Christ as depicted in 2 Corinthians 5:20 is the idea in this passage of being a *son of God*. Both are descriptors of being God’s honorable representatives.



One would think the previous seven building blocks of virtue would result in great praise by others.

Hardly.

What results is exactly the opposite reaction by the world.

III. TWO RESULTING ACCUSATIONS (5:10–11)

The biblical litmus test relative to effective “beatitudinal” execution is this: to the degree a believer is being *persecuted* and *falsified* is the degree that person is “beatitudinal.” Given the progression of this passage, if the believer is living an effective Christ-centered life characterized according to the seven preceding indicators, he will be *persecuted* and *falsified*. Expect nothing else, my friend. This will be the world’s response (as well as the response of tares in the Church) to your godly living.

If what follows is not your experience, then how spiritual—according to Jesus’ definition—are you?

A. THEN YOU WILL BE PERSECUTED

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (v. 10).

Second Timothy 3:12 stereophonically underscores this same idea: *All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.*

Persecution is the evidence of true salvation and “beatitudinal” living. There will always be reaction, resentment, and jealousy for those who live godly in Christ

Jesus. Come to expect it; it is the believer’s badge of authenticity.

B. THEN YOU WILL BE FALSIFIED

“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me” (v. 11).

Expect abusive words behind your back. If it was said of Jesus, *“Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!”* (Matthew 11:19), should you or I expect anything less? It follows that being *falsified* for Christ’s sake is a badge of authenticity.

IV. ONE RESPONSIVE APPROPRIATION

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (v. 12).

Matthew 5:11 and 12 do not state that the person who is *persecuted* and *falsified* for living “beatitudinally” should endure it. No, it says you should feel *blessed*. This promise is worth underscoring!

Note in the beginning of this verse the same idea: *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great.* Tune your emotional response in times of *persecution* and *falsification* to align with how God sees the matter! Don’t be down! God views you as honorable! Commentator Pink states adroitly, “It is strong proof of human depravity that men’s curses and Christ’s blessings should meet on the same persons.”²

The believer is to *be glad* (*agalliao*), which is an imperative command meaning “to be overjoyed” in response to *persecution*. The KJV better captures this

message when it translates *be glad* as *exceedingly glad*. The believer is commanded to respond not with doubt or sorrow over *persecution*, but rather to skip and jump with happy excitement! Such actions surrounding your life are indicative that you are building eternal rewards.

Reacting maturely to others’ negative responses to your godly living should be the norm in your life as illustrated by *the prophets who were before you*. What great company to keep!

V. TWO RESULTING ASSESSMENTS (5:13–14)

A. RESULTING IN PRESERVATION TO SOCIETY

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men” (v. 13).

Salt is an appropriate metaphor in an ancient, non-refrigerated society. *Salt* was applied to meat in order to cure it and keep it from spoiling. In a similar sense, summarily indicative of the believer who lives godly will be his influence for good on others and society. Spirit-filled Christians retard moral and spiritual spoilage by their measured maturity in Christ. Their character, actions, and policies are for the betterment of all in this world in the here and now.

What follows in this passage, *but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again*, is a reiteration and summation of the failure of the previously mentioned “beatitudinal” progression studied. Said another way, if you are not “beatitudinal,” in reality, you are not a preserver of society.



B. RESULTING IN ILLUMINATION TO SOCIETY

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (v. 14).

The second indicator of the believer’s spiritual maturity, “beatitudinal” living, can be measured by his luminal output, i.e., how much light does he cast on his surroundings? In that salt works to preserve behind the scenes, light openly illuminates and cannot be hidden. Indicative of a “beatitudinal” believer is his conspicuous presence! The believing public servant need be about proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called him. States 1 Peter 2:9:

But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God’s OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Illumination of God’s ways is normative behavior for Christ’s ambassadors. Many more are needed in D.C.!

VI. SUMMARY

I read an article that quoted the Pew Research findings that Congress is com-

posed (since the November 2016 elections) of 91 percent Christians. The article concluded, “Then why aren’t things different?” An updated 2023 Pew Research study shows that 88 percent of the current 118th Congress identify as Christian, still a majority. While the definition of “Christian” may include many who do not really follow Christ, the point remains, could it be that the believers on the Hill are not living out the progressive order of Jesus’ Beatitudes? If believers were, they would be the preservation and illumination of America! The influence of salt and light are an indication and equal to the “beatitudinal” maturity in the life of the believer. Pray the Holy Spirit will impart the progressive order of “beatitudinal” characteristics in your life so as to maximize your influence on the Hill. The degree to which you are “beatitudinal” is the degree to which you are influential.

- 1. “A declaration of a specific condition for being blessed or gaining a kind of bliss”
2. Andrew Fuller quoted in Arthur W. Pink, An Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962), 39.
3. Jeff Diamant, “Faith on the Hill: The religious composition of the 118th Congress,” Jan. 3, 2023, Pew Research Center, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/01/03/faith-on-the-hill-2023/



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