

INTRODUCTION

How many of you remember when t-shirts were only white, and they were only worn under another shirt? And how many of you can remember when shirts didn't have messages written on them—they were just plain? Over the past 30 years, t-shirts have become personal billboards for people to advertise their beliefs and attitudes. These t-shirt messages have created their own cultural philosophy. I'd like to share some of this t-shirt philosophy with you, because our text for today has found its way onto t-shirts. Here are a few humorous ones:

1. I'm not as dumb as you look
 2. The secret of success is sincerity. If you can fake that you've got it made
 3. We are the people our parents warned us about
 4. Work fascinates me. I could sit and watch it for hours
 5. People who think they know everything annoy those of us who do
 6. I refuse to have a battle of wits with an unarmed person
- And finally, our text for today: 7. The meek shall inherit the earth...after we're finished with it.

That phrase "the meek shall inherit the earth" is a popular saying, which is often quoted, but seldom recognized as coming from the lips of Jesus. And it is one of the most misunderstood sayings in the Bible as well.

In Matthew 5 Jesus shared eight simple statements about how to be blessed. These are called the beatitudes. When Jesus said, "Blessed" He used a word meaning "happy, content, or satisfied." If you want to be more blessed, happier, and more content than at any time in your life, you need to read and follow the Words of Jesus found in this book.

Matthew 5:1-4. "Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.'

Our REFRESH memory verse is "Repent, then and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord."

This is the third message in the series "REFRESH! What to do when life crashes." Wouldn't it be wonderful if life had a refresh button like the one on your internet browser? There's not a button, but you *can* experience times of personal refreshing from the Lord.

During this series, I am sharing seven steps to Refreshing. The first letter of each step spells the word REFRESH. Let's review: Step one happens when I **R**ealize that I'm not God. When that happens, I'll admit, "I am totally helpless!" That's what it means to be poor in spirit. That's the reality check step. Step two is the hope step. It's where I **E**arnestly believe God exists and that I matter to Him. When I believe God exists and understand God's loving, caring nature, I'm free to admit, "I believe God can help me!"

This third step is our focus today. When you realize you're morally bankrupt and it breaks your heart, then you're ready to: **Fully submit my life and will to Christ's control.** The refreshing attitude that ought to be is when you admit: "I'll be MEEK without being WEAK!"

Remember, these attitudes-that-ought-to-be must be understood in sequential order—each one is built upon the preceding beatitudes. In other words, you shouldn't just jump in the middle of the beatitudes and pick one to believe and practice. They come as an unbreakable set.

The beatitudes are like eight steps on a ladder. You wouldn't walk into a hardware store and tell the clerk you wanted to buy only the fourth step of a ladder would you? He'd look at you and think you're not the brightest bulb in the knife drawer! The same is true with these eight beatitudes. The first rung on the ladder is to be poor in spirit, the second rung is mourn over your spiritual deficiency. Then that produces a meek person. Before we discuss the true meaning of meekness, let's examine:

I. PERSONAL ROADBLOCKS TO REFRESHING

God wants to send refreshing into our lives. But sometimes we persist with "stinking thinking" instead of repenting and embracing the refreshing attitudes in the beatitudes. Before you experience God's personal refreshing, there are at least three roadblocks to identify and avoid.

1. Pride

Pride will keep you from admitting you need help. The Bible says, "The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin." (Proverbs 10:8) Men who get lost while driving are notorious for not stopping and asking for directions. Thousands today are struggling with hurts, habits, and hang-ups, but they are too proud to admit they need help. They slap on their plastic smiles and go on as if nothing is wrong. Pride will blind you to your sense of need. In one church, a woman came forward during the invitation and asked the pastor to pray for her, because she was guilty of pride. She said she knew she was the prettiest woman in the church, and she was struggling with pride. The preacher looked at her and said, "Ma'am you're not suffering from pride, you're suffering from ignorance." Ignorance—when you ignore your pain—is produced by pride.

2. Guilt

Your roadblock may be the attitude that you feel so guilty you're ashamed to ask God to help you. You may be in a place where all you can see is your sin and guilt piled up around you. The Psalmist moaned, "Troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see." (Psalm 40:12) It could be you've been to God so many times before asking Him for help and forgiveness that you're embarrassed to try it again. You made a promise to God that if He helped you through that tough time you'd change—and here you are again at the same place. You may be thinking, "I just couldn't go back to God and ask Him for help again." You're wrong—dead wrong. God will never say, "No. That's IT! I forgave you last time, but I told you if you ever did it again, no forgiveness." The Bible says God's mercy is everlasting. So don't let guilt block your way to seeking God's help.

3. Fear

You may be afraid to seek help because you're afraid of being exposed for who you really are. A sinner named David once wrote this prayer to God, "Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me." (Psalm 55:5) You may be reluctant to seek God's help because you're afraid of what you may have to give up. You've become so comfortable with your drinking, or your drugs, or your lifestyle, you're afraid to consider life without them. Or you may be afraid if you fully surrender control of your life to God, He will make you into one of those religious nuts. Jack Taylor used to say as a teen, he was afraid to fully surrender his life to God, because he was afraid as soon as he did, God would say, "Ah ha! I got you now!" Jack said he was certain God would make him marry an ugly girl and send him as a missionary to Africa! Don't be afraid of God's will. The best definition I ever heard of God's will is: "God's Will is what you'd choose for yourself if you had enough sense to choose it." So don't let the roadblocks of pride, guilt, and fear divert you from God's refreshing life. Now let's look at the words of Jesus and discover:

II. THE PERFECT MODEL FOR MEEKNESS

The word "meek" has been totally misused and misunderstood in our culture. We don't usually think of successful businessmen or NFL quarterbacks as meek. To most people, "meek" describes someone who is passive, submissive, weak, and mild. A meek person conjures the image of a compliant doormat—a person so timid and unassertive they allow people to walk all over them. But that's NOT the meaning of the word in the Bible. Rather let me give you the meaning of meekness, a model of meekness. Let me introduce you to a man who modeled in His life the true meaning of meekness. Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." (Matthew 11:29 KJV) I've looked at thousands of paintings depicting Christ and I shudder when I see most of them. Many of them portray Jesus as some kind of pale-skinned, emaciated wimp. He appears so frail and effeminate, if you slipped up and said, "Boo!" he would start crying.

I don't know what Jesus looked like, but I do know He was a man's man. That's why I prefer the image of Jesus painted by Antonello da Messina. Here you can see He looks like a real man. You can see the blood, the sweat, and even His tears. Jesus wasn't some wimp who let people walk all over Him. He had calloused hands from working as a carpenter. He had hair on his chest and dirt under his fingernails. He was strong enough to single-handedly drive out the crooks selling their scams on the Temple Mount. He was the kind of man rough, hard fishermen admired, followed—and even died for. So does that change your idea of what it means to be meek?



Christ at the Column (detail)
Antonello da Messina
c. 1475-1479

Here's my working definition of meekness: Meekness is not weakness, it is strength under control. When Jesus was on the cross, He really could have called down 72,000 angelic warriors to save Him—He had that strength, but He kept it under control. Meekness isn't weakness, it is strength under control. When Satan appeared to Jesus, tempting Him in the wilderness, Jesus could have

easily killed the old devil with one single thought—but He kept that strength under control.

Years ago, when I spoke at the National FCA conference in Black Mountain, North Carolina, I met a man named Paul with a black belt in karate and was an expert in other martial arts. He called his ministry Karate for Christ. He'd break all kinds of boards and concrete blocks and then share His testimony about the power of Jesus Christ. Paul told the story about being accosted by a mugger in Philadelphia one night after he had given a karate demonstration. The young mugger had a small knife and demanded Paul's money. For a moment, Paul felt a rush of adrenalin as he smiled and calculated the variety of ways he could cripple, disable, or even kill this mugger. But instead, he decided to not hurt him. So Paul just lunged at the mugger and screamed at the top of his lungs. When he did the mugger turned and ran. That's meekness. He had the strength to hurt that guy, but he kept it under control. When we display true Christian meekness, we are in position to move to this next stage.

III. PUTTING CHRIST IN CONTROL

Our third step is: Fully submit my life and will to Christ's control. The order of "life" and "will" is not incidental—it's intentional. In 1935 when Bill Wilson developed the 12 steps for Alcoholics Anonymous, he listed "will" before he listed "life." The third step in AA says: We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. I prefer this order: you must first commit and surrender your life to the Higher Power, Jesus Christ. Only after you take that step can you surrender your will to Him.

It will help you to understand that the Christian life begins with a decision, but it continues as a process. It is both an act of deciding to follow Jesus followed by a process of daily walking with God. Let's examine both aspects:

1. It is first a DECISION in which I submit my life to Christ's control

That's a one-time event we often call "when I was saved." Paul describes this one-time surrender in this way: "I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1) That verb "offer" is a word that clearly means, "once for all." But when you made that one-time decision to accept Jesus Christ, that wasn't all there was to the Christian life. That was just the first step in a long, exciting process. But don't confuse the decision with the details of the process.

For instance, I can remember in 1963 when President John F. Kennedy said America would put a man on the moon before the end of that decade. When he said that, had all the problems been worked out to make it happen? Of course not. As our country's leader, He made the decision and communicated it as a challenge. Then it was up to all the smart guys at NASA to carry through the process. But again, many of us were present when Neal Armstrong fulfilled that decision when he said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

You may be stuck, because you thought you were finished when you said, "I'm going to follow Jesus. I'm going to go to heaven." And now you can't understand why you're in such a mess. It's

because you've got to understand that after you make the decision, you must continue to pay attention to the process. Here's what it is:

2. A PROCESS. My part in this process is to surrender my will to Christ's control

After the decision, the Christian life involves a process. My part in this process is to surrender my will to Christ's control. Notice the order. You submit your life first—that's a one-time decision. But then you must repeatedly, daily, hourly keep on continually surrendering you will to Christ's control.

The Bible describes this process this way: "Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." (Philippians 2:12-13) Now we don't have to "work out" our salvation like we're working out a tough crossword puzzle. It literally means to let our salvation "work out of us." The secret is found where it says it is God who works in you. It was years before I understood this, but the Bible says it is God who works in me both to will and to DO according to his good purpose. That means when I surrender to Him, God gives me the will to want to do the right thing. He gives me a new "want to." That's the only kind of willpower that works. My human willpower fails every time. But God's divine willpower never fails.

The Christian life is first a decision—it involves you heart and mind and soul. But the Christian life is also a process and involves your will. It's all about willpower. Will it be my will or God's Will?

CONCLUSION

The best way to understand what Jesus meant when He said, "Blessed are the meek" is to relate it to teaching a horse to be ridden. A horse is a magnificent, powerful creature but it doesn't naturally allow a person to climb in its back and ride. All horses possess a wild nature that resists being controlled. In order to be ridden, a horse must repent—or change its attitude about being ridden.

It reminds me of the funny ad for a dude ranch I heard about. This ranch advertised they offered a variety of horses to ride. For big people they had big horses; for little people they had little horses, for fast people they had fast horses. And for people who have never ridden, they had horses that had never been ridden." Who would want to ride a horse that hadn't been "broken?"

The original Greek word for "meek" found in Matthew 5:5 is *praos*. In Bible times this word was used to describe the process often called "breaking a horse." When a horse is first bridled and saddled, it doesn't stand there placidly. It has a rebellious will causing it to resist and buck—that's just part of its equine nature. We're the same way. Our fallen, human nature causes us to resist and buck any kind of control over our lives.

It takes patience and time for a horse trainer to "break a horse" to the point where it will submit to a rider on its back. The cowboy doesn't break the horse's back, or break the horse's leg; he has to break its stubborn will. A good trainer can take a stallion, full of fire and strength, and

break its will so it becomes meek. The stallion still maintains its strength and power, but now that strength is under the rider's control.

Meekness is strength under control. In the same way God wants to lovingly break you and put you under His authority. He wants to make you sensitive to His leadership; ready at any time to respond to the commands of your Master. Rather than following your own will, you are following the will of God. As you consider your level of meekness, simply answer this question: Have you allowed god to break your stubborn will?

Last year I rode in the Mane Mission event to help raise money for our friends at Breckenridge Village. My friends, the Allens, were kind enough to allow me to ride one of their horses, Dolly. I grew up riding horses, but this was the first time I'd been on a horse in about 10 years. It's not exactly like riding a bicycle! I joined the ride late, so when I arrived, the rest of the group was already on a route that would bring them back to the starting point. Our plan was to ride in the opposite direction to meet up with the other riders, then turn around and ride back with them. Dolly had seen, heard, and smelled the direction of all the other horses, so when I directed her to go in the opposite direction, she decided she didn't want to go that way. She resisted. There was a period of time there when we engaged in a battle of wills. Was she going to go the way SHE wanted to go, or the way I wanted us to go? After a few minutes of pulling on the reins and a little bucking...she tossed me off and trotted off in the other direction.... Not really. It took a little time for us to work out the idea that I was the one who would control our direction. But I could sense the moment in which Dolly decided to be meek, where she surrendered control of her will to me. She didn't lose any of her strength or power; she just let me guide her. And it wasn't a permanent meekness. There were a couple more times on the ride when she resisted my direction, and we had to settle the issue again, "who's in control?"

Sometimes we get into a battle of wills with God. You say, "I want to go this way," and you sense God saying, "No, I want you to go THIS way." The Christian life is a process of repeatedly surrendering control of our wills to God. Sometimes we only go in God's direction kicking and screaming. But God doesn't want us to battle wills with Him like a horse and rider. He wants to make it easier on us. He says, "Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you." (Psalm 32:9) We've all heard the expression, "as stubborn as a mule." When it comes to relating to God, being stubborn as a mule is the exact opposite of meekness. God doesn't want to have to jerk our reins or use spurs to get us to go in the right direction.

A well trained horse being ridden by an expert equestrian is a thing of beauty. The animal wants to follow his master's directions and he can almost sense the rider's desires. An expert rider on a well-trained horse only has to make a sound, lean a certain way, or exert a tiny bit of pressure on the reins and the horse immediately submits.

That's the way I want to be controlled by Jesus. I want to be so sensitive to His voice and His will that He doesn't have to exert pressure on me. I don't want to be like a mule God has to hit over the head with a 2x4 just to get my attention. I want to be like the person God describes in Isaiah 30:21 "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'" But before you can be guided that easily, you must allow

your stubborn will to be broken. Meekness is not weakness, it's strength under control—under the control of Jesus Christ.

You may be thinking, "Pastor, I don't want to be BROKEN. That's my problem—I feel like a broken-down person now. I feel like that Humpty Dumpty guy. My life is in pieces, and all the king's horses and all the king's men can't put me back together again." They can't—but the King can. When you surrender all the pieces of your broken heart to King Jesus, He can mend your broken heart. But in order to do that, you must allow Him to break the strongest part of your personality, your stubborn will.

When I spoke to the Celebrate Recovery group last Monday, I reminded them God cherishes broken things. In the world, we de-value broken things. In baseball, if a bat is broken, you toss it. If a TV is broken, you may find it cheaper to get a new one, so you toss it. In contrast, God values broken things. The alabaster box of perfume had to be broken before the fragrance filled the room. The five loaves and two fishes had to be broken before a miracle happened. And Jesus said, "This is my body which is BROKEN for you." David prayed, "A broken and a contrite spirit, Oh God you will not despise." (Psalm 51:17) Will you ask God to break you today? Will you ask Him to break your stubborn, rebellious will?

There's a praise chorus we've sung for years, that has the idea of brokenness. But as I sing it, don't visualize a broken vessel; instead visualize a horse that is broken. "Spirit of the Living God, fall fresh on me; BREAK ME, melt me, mold me, fill me. Spirit of the Living God fall fresh on me." When you fully surrender you life and will to Jesus Christ, times of refreshing will come from the Lord.

OUTLINE

Realize that I'm not God: "I am totally helpless!"

Earnestly believe God exists and that I matter to Him: "I believe God can help me!"

Fully submit my life and will to Christ's control: "I'll be MEEK without being WEAK!"

I. PERSONAL ROADBLOCKS TO REFRESHING

1. Pride

"The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin." *Proverbs 10:8*

2. Guilt

"Troubles without number surround me; my sins have overtaken me, and I cannot see." *Psalms 40:12*

3. Fear

"Fear and trembling have beset me; horror has overwhelmed me." *Psalms 55:5*

II. THE PERFECT MODEL FOR MEEKNESS

Jesus said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." *Matthew 11:29 KJV*

DEFINITION: Meekness is not weakness, it is strength under control

III. PUTTING CHRIST IN CONTROL

1. A decision: Submit my life to Christ's control

"I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship." *Romans 12:1*

2. A process: Surrender my will to Christ's control

"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose." *Philippians 2:12-13*



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes