

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

Matthew 5:8

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. God wants your total surrender – to give Him complete control over every arena of your life. But that’s hard to do, right? Why? Because we want to be happy, and we are afraid that God doesn’t care about our happiness. We are afraid that if we surrender to God, we will surrender our happiness. But the Bible says the opposite. God wants you to be happy. He loves you. He wants what is best for you. In fact, Jesus taught the secret to happiness in His most famous sermon. It is a portion of scripture popularly called the beatitudes, and that’s the subject of our sermon series right now. Jesus taught that the secret to happiness is not found in the Ps – pleasure, possessions, power, prestige, praise, popularity, etc., but in cultivating the eight qualities known as the beatitudes. God wants you to be happy. You can be happy. And you will be happy if you follow Jesus’ teaching.

2. Let’s re-read the beatitudes.

3. Matthew 5:3-10

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

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

5 Blessed are the humble, 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 be shown mercy.

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

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

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

4. These eight character qualities are called the beatitudes, which comes from the Latin word *beatus*, meaning blessed or happy. Today we are going to study the sixth beatitude.

II. TEXT

1. **Matthew 5:8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

III. THE PURE IN HEART

1. Remember, each beatitude follows the same pattern. There is a promise, a condition, and an explanation. The promise in this verse is that you will be blessed/happy. The condition is that you must be pure in heart. The explanation or reason is that you will see God.
2. What does it mean to be pure in heart?
3. Let's begin with the word "pure," which means clean, pure, clear, innocent. In other words, moral blamelessness. It's similar to the ideas of holiness and righteousness. It means doing what is right and avoiding what is evil. It means being clean from all moral impurity and filth and contamination.
4. It should come as no surprise that God wants you to be pure. This is stated all over the Bible.
5. **2 Corinthians 7:1 (NIV)** Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.
6. But the beatitude doesn't merely say "Blessed are the pure," it says, "Blessed are the pure in heart." If you think back to the first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," the words "in spirit" tell us the kind of poverty Jesus is talking about. He wasn't just saying happy are the poor; if you want to be happy, then go and sell all you have and live in poverty. No, He said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Here in the sixth beatitude we see something similar. The words "in heart" describe the kind of purity Jesus is talking about.
7. In the Bible, the word heart refers to the center of your being, including your mind, will and emotions (NIV Study Bible). In the New Testament it never refers to the organ in your chest. It always refers figuratively to your inner self rather than your external actions; He's talking about the invisible part of you rather than the visible part of you. Jesus isn't saying that outward, external purity isn't important; He is saying that if you want to be happy, then you need to pursue more than mere external and outward purity; you must pursue purity in heart; inner purity.

IV. DON'T BE LIKE THE PHARISEES

1. In other words, Jesus was saying that your purity needs to be greater than the Pharisees'.

2. **Matthew 5:20** For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.
3. Jesus picked on the Pharisees a lot. In fact, His most severe rebukes were reserved for the Pharisees. There's an entire chapter in which Jesus is preaching against them (see Mt 23). Who in the world were the Pharisees, and what was their problem?
4. The Pharisees were one of the major Jewish groups in the first century. They started up about 168 B.C. There were several Jewish groups, but the Pharisees were the most powerful because they were the most respected by the people. Their passion was keeping God's commands. On the surface that sounds great. In reality they weren't great. They had lost their way. Judaism was supposed to be about loving God and loving people; in other words, the heart. But they had made it all about external rule-keeping and neglected the heart. Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 23.
5. **Matthew 23:27-28** 27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of impurity. 28 In the same way, on the outside you seem righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."
6. Do you see what Jesus was saying? The Pharisees looked holy and righteous on the outside – they appeared to be externally pure; but they neglected inner purity – the heart.
7. Look at what Jesus said about them in another place.
8. **Mak 7:6** He answered them, "Isaiah prophesied correctly about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."
9. The Pharisees looked religious on the outside, but on the inside they were irreligious.
10. God doesn't just want external purity; He wants purity, holiness, righteousness on the inside as well.
11. What does that look like? There are six ways to cultivate heart-purity.

V. SIX WAYS TO CULTIVATE HEART-PURITY

1. **Be pure in your thoughts.**

- i. Did you know that God knows your thoughts? He knows what you are thinking all the time.
 - 1. **1 Chronicles 28:9 (NIV)** for the LORD searches every heart and understands every desire and every thought.
- ii. God cares about your thoughts.
 - 1. **Philippians 4:8 (NIV)** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.
 - 2. **2 Corinthians 10:3** “We take every thought captive to obey Christ.”
- iii. Again, God doesn’t just care about your outward behavior. He wants purity in your thoughts as well.
- iv. Why? Your thoughts determine your feelings, and your feelings determine your actions. If you allow yourself to think about evil things, they will change the way you feel, and they will eventually change your behavior.
- v. Look at what Jesus said about the sin of adultery.
- vi. **Matthew 5:27-28** 27 “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. 28 But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
- vii. Jesus was referring to the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, one of which said, “Do not commit adultery.” But Jesus says that God isn’t merely interested in your outward behavior, but your thoughts. He said that if you lust after someone who is not your spouse, entertaining inappropriate thoughts and fantasies about them, then that too is sin. In God’s eyes that is also adultery.
- viii. I heard it said before that if you allow yourself to commit sexual sin with your eyes and your thoughts, then you are no better than the man who commits the physical act, because the only thing holding you back is lack of opportunity. In other words, if you could commit the physical act without anyone finding out, then you would act out.

- ix. Lust is not the only kind of sinful thought. You might fantasize about hurting someone, about taking revenge, about stealing something.
- x. Don't be satisfied with external purity. Strive for heart-purity by glorifying God with every thought.
- xi. How do you get control of your thoughts? It is difficult to stop thinking about something. The solution is to redirect your thoughts. You can't control the thoughts that pop into your head. Sometimes they are put there by Satan. You can control what you do with those thoughts. When a sinful thought pops into your head, redirect your thought to scripture. Memorize a verse that you can meditate on instead of the sinful thought. If you struggle with lustful thoughts, for example, Romans 13:14 is a good memory verse.
- xii. **Romans 13:14 (NIV)** Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.

2. Be pure in your desires.

- i. Your heart also includes your desires. God wants you to have pure desires.
- ii. How can you tell what your desires are? Your desires are reflected by what you are pursuing, running after, aiming for.
- iii. For example, the Bible says that you shouldn't chase riches. Money is not evil, and it is not a sin to be rich. However, it is a sin to make it your goal to be rich.
- iv. **1 Timothy 6:9-10** 9 But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.
- v. Most people are chasing money. Why? Because with money they can buy the Ps – pleasure, possessions, position, power, popularity, praise, etc. But the Bible says that the desire for riches will cause you to drift from God and plunge you into ruin and destruction.

- vi. What should you pursue instead of money?
 - 1. Rm 12:13 says to pursue hospitality, and to share with the saints in their needs.
 - 2. Rm 14:19 says to pursue what promotes peace in the church.
 - 3. Rm 14:1 says to pursue love for God and others.
 - 4. Phil 3:14 says to pursue heaven.
 - 5. 1 Tim 6:11 says to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.
 - 6. Heb 12:14 says to pursue peace with everyone, and holiness.
- vii. Notice in 1 Tim 6:9-10 that Paul equates the desire to be rich with “the love of money.” Your desires are not only reflected by what you are pursuing, but by what you love. The object of your love is what you are most fond of, what you have the most affection for, what you most treasure, what is most important to you. To be pure in heart is to love the right things – to treasure the right things, to reserve your deepest affection for the right things. For example, there are some things that you should not love, such as money, and possessions, and sin. Instead, the Bible says that your love should be reserved for God and people. When Jesus was asked about the greatest of the commandments, He said it was to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself (see Mk 12:29-31).
- viii. Not only does heart-purity mean loving the right things, but in the right order. God wants you to love people. He wants you to love all people, especially your spouse, and children, and parents, and fellow believers. But most of and first of all, God wants you to love Him.
- ix. **Matthew 10:37** The one who loves a father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; the one who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
- x. In other words, God wants to be first in your affections, first in your priorities, the person that you most treasure, and value, and cherish.

- xi. So being pure in heart means having pure desires. It means pursuing the right things, and loving the right things.
- xii. What are you pursuing? God, spiritual growth, kingdom growth, the spiritual growth of others, the glory of God? Or are you running after the Ps – pleasure, possessions, popularity, position, etc.,? Who or what do you most love? What is the thing that is most important to you? What is the thing that you most value? What is the thing that you have the most affection for? Is it God and the people in your life, or is it sin, or a hobby, or one of your possessions?
- xiii. How can you tell what your desires are? Look at your finances and your time. How you spend your money and your time are good indicators of what you are pursuing and what you love.
- xiv. Why does God care about your desires? Because your desires will work their way out in your behavior, in your relationships. Your desires determine your goals, your values, your priorities. They determine how you spend your time and money.

3. Be pure in your attitude.

- i. Your heart also includes your attitude, or how you think about people and things. As you read the Bible, you will notice that your attitude is just as important to God as your actions.
- ii. What are some examples of attitudes that you need to cultivate to have a pure heart? Let's look at four.
- iii. First, humility. Humility is seeing yourself the way God sees you. Priceless, but no more important than anyone else. Loved by God, but a sinner in need of a Savior. Able to do all things through Christ who gives you strength, but weak and vulnerable without Christ's constant enabling and sustaining power. Humility is the opposite of pride, which is thinking too highly of yourself; thinking you are better and more important than others; thinking you don't need God or a church family.
- iv. **Colossians 3:12** Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.

- v. Second, forgiveness. Forgiveness is an action, but it is also an attitude. How do you think about people who hurt you? Do you see them as enemies and hate them and pray for their destruction? Or do you do you see them as people who are loved by God, and therefore you love them, and pray for their spiritual and material prosperity? Do you see them as unworthy of forgiveness, or do you see them as no worse than you? Remember, what you have done to God is far worse than anything anyone has done to you.
- vi. **Matthew 5:43-44** 43 “You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor, and hate your enemy. 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.
- vii. Third, gratitude. Some people go through life with a negative attitude; just about every sentence contains a complaint about someone or something. Those people focus on the negative, on the things that are not perfect or ideal in their life; they focus on what they don’t have. But other people focus on the positive; they focus on the things they do have; they focus on the fact that they have it far better than they deserve, and things could be far worse. Instead of chronic complaining, they are perpetually thankful.
- viii. **Philippians 2:14 (NLT)** Do everything without complaining and arguing.
- ix. **1 Thessalonians 5:18** Give thanks in everything; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
- x. Fourth, excellence. What do I mean by excellence? You may not think of excellence as an attitude, but it is. It is a mindset that I am a walking advertisement for Jesus Christ, so I am going to do everything to the best of my ability.
- xi. **Colossians 3:23 (NIV)** Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.
- xii. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart. Why? Because you are a walking advertisement for Christ. You are a walking billboard, a living commercial for Christianity. You know the old saying, actions speak louder than words? Your actions don’t just

speaking, they shout. Your actions either shout that Christianity makes a person better, or worse, or it makes no difference in your life at all.

- xiii. If you want to cultivate a pure heart, then you need to cultivate a pure attitude.
- xiv. **Philippians 2:5** Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus.

4. Be pure in your emotions.

- i. Your heart also includes your emotions, your feelings. God doesn't just require purity in your actions, but even in your emotions and feelings. Let me give you some examples.
- ii. First, God wants you to replace worry with peace. The bible repeatedly commands us not to worry.
- iii. **Philippians 4:6** Don't worry about anything....
- iv. Why not? Because worry is an indicator that you have two problems. First, it indicates that you lack faith. Worry is the fear that God is not going to fulfill His promise to take care of you. Second, worry indicates that you have faith in the wrong thing. We worry when we feel like we're about to lose something that we think we need to be happy. We worry when we might lose a relationship, an income level, a possession, a job, because we don't believe that God is enough. We don't feel like we can be happy without those things. We are trusting in those things for happiness rather than God. And that may be why God would take some of those things away from you. God doesn't want you to worry; He wants you to have inner peace – the peace that comes from the confidence that God is with you, and He is all you need.
- v. Second, God wants you to replace fear with courage. I'm specifically talking about the fear of man. Over and over the Bible says to not fear men.
- vi. **Isaiah 41:10** Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will hold on to you with my righteous right hand.
- vii. Why doesn't God want you to fear men? Because the fear of man will cause you to compromise? It will cause you to disobey God. It will lead to sinful actions. Instead, God wants you to be

courageous. He wants you to be confident that people can't touch you unless God allows it, and if He does He will use it for your good.

- viii. Third, God wants you to replace anger with patience. Anger in and of itself is not sinful (Eph 4:26). Even God gets angry. Anger is a normal and healthy emotion. However, anger is sinful when it is for the wrong reason, or too quick, or too intense, or directed at the wrong person. Instead, God wants you to be patient – be slow to anger; have a long fuse.
- ix. **James 1:19** “Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger.”
- x. Fourth, God wants you to replace apathy with sympathy. What do you feel when someone you know goes through a rough patch. Nothing? Joy? Or do you feel sorry for them? Here's a tougher one: What do you feel when someone you know has a victory? Disappointment? Resentment? Anger? Or do you feel happy? God wants you to feel sympathy for others. Feel sorry for those who suffer, and feel happy for others when they win.
- xi. **Romans 12:15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.
- xii. Fifth, God wants you to replace sadness with joy. There's a place for sadness in the Christian life. Jesus wept. But God doesn't want you to be perpetually sad. He doesn't want you to live under a cloud of sadness and depression all day every day. Let me put it this way. Sadness should be seasonal, but joy should be year-round.
- xiii. **Philippians 4:4** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

5. Be pure in your motives.

- i. Your heart also includes your motives – the reason that you do things. Pure in heart means having pure motives. It means doing the right things for the right reason.
- ii. This was one of Jesus's major criticisms of the Pharisees – not merely that they did the wrong things, but they often did the right things for the wrong reasons.

- iii. **Matthew 6:1** Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. Otherwise, you have no reward with your Father in heaven.
- iv. Jesus went on to say that you need to give for the right reasons. When you give to the poor or to the church or to a charity, don't do it to be applauded by people.
- v. And when you pray, don't pray so others can see you or hear you and admire your spirituality.
- vi. And when you fast, don't make it obvious and tell everybody so they will be impressed with your commitment.
- vii. Instead, He said that your one motive for everything you do must be to please and glorify God. Live for an audience of one.
- viii. **1 Corinthians 10:31** So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.
- ix. Think about why you go to church or Home Group; why you have a quiet time; why you memorize scripture; why you tithe; why you volunteer. Is it because you want people to admire you; to accept you? Is it because you want to avoid criticism? Why do you dress the way you do, or drive that car, or live in that house, or work at that job? Do whatever you do with the right motive.

6. Be pure in private.

- i. Finally, the heart would include your private life. To be pure in heart means that you are not only pure and righteous and holy when others are watching, but even in private.
- ii. **Matthew 6:5** "Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward.
- iii. Jesus is criticizing the kind of person who doesn't actually believe in the power of prayer. If they did, they would pray in private. Instead, they only pray in public so people will admire them.
- iv. In other words, Jesus is criticizing hypocrisy. Saying one thing and doing another. Your words and actions don't match up. A hypocrite is an actor, a pretender, fake. They act holy in public, but in private they are a completely different person. They act

holy at church, but at work or school they act different. They act holy at church, but on the way to church they are a different person.

- v. To be pure in heart you need to be a person of integrity. That means that your words and actions are integrated; they are aligned.
- vi. To be pure in heart is to have pure character. Your reputation is who you are in public. Your character is who you are when no one is watching. And who you are when no one is watching is who you are. Don't fool yourself. However spiritual you are in private, that's how spiritual you really are.
- vii. You can fool people. But you can't fool God. And in the end, what He thinks is all that matters.

VI. WHY THE PURE IN HEART ARE HAPPY

1. So to be pure in heart is to seek holiness and righteousness internally, not just externally. Not just in your actions, but in private, in your motives, attitude, feelings, desires, and thoughts. The inner you. The real you. Do that, Jesus says, and you will be happy. How so? What is the connection between heart-purity and happiness?
2. **Matthew 5:4** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
3. If you are pure in heart, you will see God. There are two ways this can be interpreted. First, it could be talking about heaven. The Bible says that those who go to heaven will literally see God; it's called the beatific vision, or the blessed or happy vision. It represents intimate, unbroken fellowship with God. When you get saved, God gives you a new heart. So, some say this verse means that those who have been given a new, clean heart by God through faith in Jesus are blessed because they will go to heaven and see God.
4. A second interpretation is that Jesus is not talking about the beatific vision in the next life, but deeper intimacy with God in this life, and that's the ultimate source of happiness in life.
5. **Psalms 16:11** "In your presence is abundant joy."
6. Other versions say, "In your presence there is fulness of joy." In other words, the closer you are to God, the happier you will be. But nearness to God is not possible if you have sin in your life. When you sin, you

don't lose your salvation, but you do lose intimacy with God. And the more you grow in purity, not just external and outward purity but heart-purity, the closer you will be to God, and the happier you will be.

VII. CONCLUSION

1. Let me close with two important thoughts. First, no one is totally pure in heart. We are all sinners in need of a Savior. That's why God sent Jesus to pay for our sins. Hopefully this message helps you see how high God's standards are, and how far you fall short. You need to know and believe that to be saved. You need to know that you are a sinner, you don't deserve heaven, and you can't save yourself. But Jesus can and will save you. Hopefully studying purity of heart will convince you that if you want to go to heaven, you can't earn it. All you can do is trust in Jesus who died for you.
2. One more thought. You can't achieve heart-purity in your own strength. Only God can give you a pure heart. You have to pray for it. You have to pray like David, "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me (Ps 51:10, NIV)."