

## Week Forty: Kingdom Disposition - Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 7:36-50



### Overview

The Lord's prohibition against eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil required that Adam and Eve cultivate a disposition of faith in God's goodness and surrender to His authority. After their failure to believe and obey Him, God gave them a promise of redemption (Gen. 3:15) and a picture of redemption (3:21). These too would require a disposition toward God of faith and surrender to His

authority. Abel, the

early descendants of Seth, and Noah demonstrate this disposition toward God. In contrast, Cain and his descendants, all those who dwelt upon the earth alongside Noah, and the builders of the tower of Babel demonstrate a proud disposition of unbelief and rebellion against God.

Abraham's promise from God regarding a son, a land, and a people required a disposition toward God of faith and surrender. This same disposition characterized the patriarchs, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Rahab, Ruth, David, Elijah, Elisha, Josiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Nehemiah and others who walked with God. Sadly, most of the Israelites God had brought out of Egypt displayed a disposition against Him, and this attitude continued throughout the time of the judges, the kings of Israel and Judah.

Faith shows up. It accompanies a disposition of humility toward God and surrender to God. It transforms those who possess it. Today's lesson will contrast this kingdom disposition with that of the religionists of Jesus' day and offer a concrete example of each.

### Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, participants will better understand the kingdom disposition that accompanies God's blessing and possess a metric by which they may evaluate their own disposition toward God.

### Key Truths

*Jesus did not come to give and enforce rules or endorse rule-keepers, but to free people to walk with Him in love and faith.*

*Humility, faith in God, and surrender to Him distinguish people of faith from all others.*

*A judgmental attitude toward others reveals a proud disposition toward God. Those who possess a humble disposition toward God care little about what others think of them.*

*Humility attracts the heart of God, while pride repels Him.*

*Those who understand the gravity of their sin love Him openly and extravagantly.*

*Those who exhibit the disposition of faith and surrender toward God receive life from God, while those who walk in pride and unbelief remain spiritually dead while they live.*

## Lesson Outline

The two contrasting dispositions toward God—faith and surrender or unbelief and rebellion—continue throughout the Gospels. The Beatitudes reveal the disposition that faith in and surrender to God require, and the story of the Pharisee and the sinful woman contrasts the dispositions toward Him and against Him.

### 1. The Eight Characteristics of a Disposition toward God - Matthew 5:3-10

- Acknowledgement of spiritual bankruptcy - “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (5:3). Those with a disposition toward God are aware of their impoverished condition Him. They are kingdom people.
- Comprehension of sin and its consequences - “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (4). Those with a disposition toward God grieve over their sin. They are comforted people.
- Humility in outlook - “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (5). Those possessing a disposition toward God humble themselves before Him and others. They bear His image on earth.
- Recognition of personal lack of and need for righteousness - “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (6). Those who acknowledge their flaws and imperfections as sin sense their need for redemption. They experience real life.
- Empathize with the need of others - “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (7). Those whose hearts have been warmed by Christ’s forgiveness reach out to and offer forgiveness to others. They are recipients and dispensers of mercy.
- Despair of any hope or change through anything or anyone except Christ - “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (8). Those who are without pretension see clearly. They reveal God as He is.
- Identification with others - “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (9). Those reconciled with God live happily others-centered lives. They reflect Him.
- Embrace the cost of doing what’s right - “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (10). Those who accept what Christ has done for them embrace suffering. They focus on the coming of His kingdom.

### 2. A Parable of Disposition - Luke 7:36-50

Jesus uses a story to confront the Pharisees’ sinful disposition against God and reward the sinful woman’s humble disposition before God: “There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And

when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?” (Lk. 7:41-42).

This story offers a stark contrast between the proud and the humble disposition toward God:

<b>Disposition toward God</b>	<b>The Pharisee</b>	<b>The Sinful Woman</b>
<b>Acknowledgment of spiritual bankruptcy</b>	He was blind to his own spiritual need. He saw Jesus as his equal.	Her many sins drove her to Christ.
<b>Comprehension of sin and its consequences</b>	He, as a Pharisee, had a reputation of acting better than everyone else.	She had a reputation of a “sinner” by all who knew her.
<b>Humility in outlook</b>	He was too proud to wash and anoint the feet of Jesus.	She wet his feet with her tears, used her hair as a towel, and anointed Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume.
<b>Recognition of personal lack of and need for righteousness</b>	He invited Jesus to eat with him out of curiosity, not out of spiritual need.	She wept as she washed Jesus feet.
<b>Empathize with the need of others</b>	He acted as a judge toward the woman.	She was rejected by the Pharisee, but at home with Jesus.
<b>Hope in God and despair of self</b>	He saw Jesus only as an eating companion and “Teacher,” rather than the One deserving worship.	She had nothing to lose in humbling herself before the Pharisee and Jesus.
<b>Identification with others</b>	He condemned Jesus for allowing the woman to touch Him.	She assumed the place of a lowly servant.

Embrace the cost of doing what's right

His lack of humility was obvious in his arrogant "sitting" with Jesus, instead of treating Jesus as an honored guest.

She humbled herself to enter the home of a Pharisee, knowing that she would be judged and rejected by him.

**3. This story reveals eight characteristics of those who possess a proud disposition against God:**

- Obliviousness to an impoverished condition before God - Like the Pharisee, theirs may be a life of rule-keeping and superiority toward others, or theirs may be a life of immorality; neither see their need before God. They are haughty before God and others.
- Deficient understanding of the holiness of God and a need for reconciliation to Him - They feel no guilt over the sin that they commit, or, like the Pharisee, they redefine their sin as something else.
- Unbending pride toward God and others - They seek power to dominate others. They are domineering and, like the Pharisee, judgmental toward others.
- Ignorance of sin, or attributing face-saving psychological terminology to their "flaws" or "imperfections" - They concentrate on the temporal only; theirs is a hunger for possessions and accomplishments.
- Indifference to the needs of others - Rather than meet the needs of others, they use people to meet their own needs.
- Hypocrisy - They pretend to be other than they are. Because they don't know themselves, they cannot know God.
- Alienation from others - Theirs is a world of broken relationships.
- Mean-spirited bullying - They judge, oppress, mistreat, and persecute those who are unlike themselves.

**Application** - What does this lesson teach us about God? Man? Sin? Redemption? *God doesn't measure a man based how he compares with others. He measures a man based on his disposition toward God and his surrender to Jesus Christ.*

*Those who exalt themselves above and judge others reveal their lack of spiritual realism.*

*Simple stories have a way of uncovering and revealing the heart.*

**Summary**

*God speaks* through simple stories to expose a person's disposition before God.

*God acts* by forgiving those aware of their "great" sin and freeing them from shame and guilt, while those He withholds His mercy from the proud.

*God reveals* the hearts of the humble and the proud.

## **Discussion Questions**

How does the world's evaluation of sin and the sinner differ from God's?

Consider Peter's reference to Proverbs 3:34, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (1 Pet. 5:5). Describe ways in which people in church today exalt proud Pharisees and judge humble sinners.

How does Jesus treat the woman when she comes to Him? Notice where He looks when He is speaking to the Pharisee. How is He honoring the humble and shaming the proud? How does He treat us in our areas of brokenness or our areas of pride?