

N O V E M B E R 6 & 7 , 2 0 0 4

The Real Deal

Becoming and Being a True Follower of Christ

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Part 6: Unplugging Your Pipe

Matthew 5:7

The genuine article. The real deal. What's involved in becoming and being a true follower of Jesus Christ? That is a question we want to begin to answer in this series.

Floating around our culture are many definitions and opinions of what a true Christian is and the resulting adjectives are often less than flattering: Obnoxious. Fanatical. Pious. Intellectually shallow. Religious. Closed-minded. Crutch-holder. Right winged. Simplistic. No fun. Legalistic. Boring. Intolerant. Judgmental. Naïve. Out of touch with the real world.

Then you come into religious circles and the definitions might not be as negative but they are often just as confusing: Church attender. Rule-keeper. Bible-owner. Person who prays. Somebody with conviction. Good morals. Nice family person. Somebody who filled out a form at an evangelistic meeting. Or raised a hand. Or walked down an aisle.

So what is a Christian? For the answer, we thought it would be a good idea to turn to Christ Himself. We are looking at His definition of a follower of His by taking a closer look at what has become known as the "Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:3-10).

In our introduction, we looked at the overall context of Christ's teaching in Matthew 5-7, which is known as the "Sermon on the Mount." In these chapters, Jesus is proclaiming the "good news of the Kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). He is explaining what an authentic relationship with God is all about. The Kingdom of God is referring to the "rule" or "reign" of God. To seek after an authentic walk with God is to submit to His rule—His leadership, His provision, His grace, His forgiveness, His power. Therefore you cannot separate becoming and being an authentic follower of Christ's from seeking His Kingdom.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus gives us eight marks of someone who is "blessed," who is approved before God. Eight cumulative characteristics of a Kingdom-seeker. In the first beatitude, we heard Christ's call to acknowledge our desperation—our spiritual bankruptcy before God. In the second, He describes the appropriate response to the reality that's embedded in the first: When I own up to my true spiritual condition, my poverty of spirit, I will mourn it, turning to Him for intervention, for comfort. We then become meek, which doesn't mean "weak" but instead refers to a submission of our potential to His control. We then begin to understand our longings in the context of our hunger and thirst for God.

Today, we come to the fifth beatitude, *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.* Here Jesus is dealing with the relationship between what we experience and what we express—we cannot give something away that we don't have. If we have experienced His grace and mercy, we will give it away!

As an authentic follower of Christ, I will ensure that the momentum of my walk with Him is upheld by being more of a "pipe" instead of a "bucket."

Four traits of a "pipe:"

1. _____ about my _____ .

2. _____ for God's _____ .

3. _____ of _____ .

4. _____ regarding _____ .