

OCTOBER 23 & 24, 2004

## The Real Deal

*Becoming and Being a True Follower of Christ*

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### Part 4: Tough and Tender

#### Matthew 5:5

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 attendee. 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. You can't have one without the other.

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. And when we receive it, we taste His joy!

Today, we come to the third beatitude, which must be taken in the context of the first two. *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.* Having confessed my need for Him and turned to Him, the trajectory of my life takes a radical turn—I begin to become meek! That word doesn't sit well with most of us because we misunderstand it. Meekness is not weakness. The core meaning of the word is actually referring to "power brought under control"—the power, the beauty, the potential of our lives is submitted to the King's control!

***A meek—and therefore authentic—follower of Jesus Christ will demonstrate at least four life trajectories that come from a combination of both tenderness and toughness:***

#### **(A meek, authentic follower of Christ is TENDER...)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Holy Spirit.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ others.

#### **(A meek, authentic follower of Christ is TOUGH...)**

3. \_\_\_\_\_ because of our inheritance.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ because of our King.