



Meekness Is Not Weakness – Matthew 5:5

I. INTRO

A. Several years ago a book was written that became a business classic. The title is: *Good To Great* by Jim Collins.¹ The book was based on a 5-year research project that addressed a single question: Can a good organization become a great organization?

1. The researchers studied over 1,400 companies with “good” performance records and found 11 that had moved from “Good To Great” (according to certain criteria).
2. The book unpacked seven principles that will move an organization from being a “good” one to becoming a “great” one.
3. One of those principals:
 - a. Principal # 3 says that to become great, an organization needs to Confront the Brutal Facts of [It’s] Current Reality. What does that mean?
 - b. The book addresses three primary components to Confronting the Brutal Facts:
 - 1) Create a climate where the truth is heard.
 - 2) Get the data (like your last physical – weight, BP, temp).
 - 3) Embrace the “Stockdale Paradox.” “Never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.” --Vice Admiral James Stockdale².

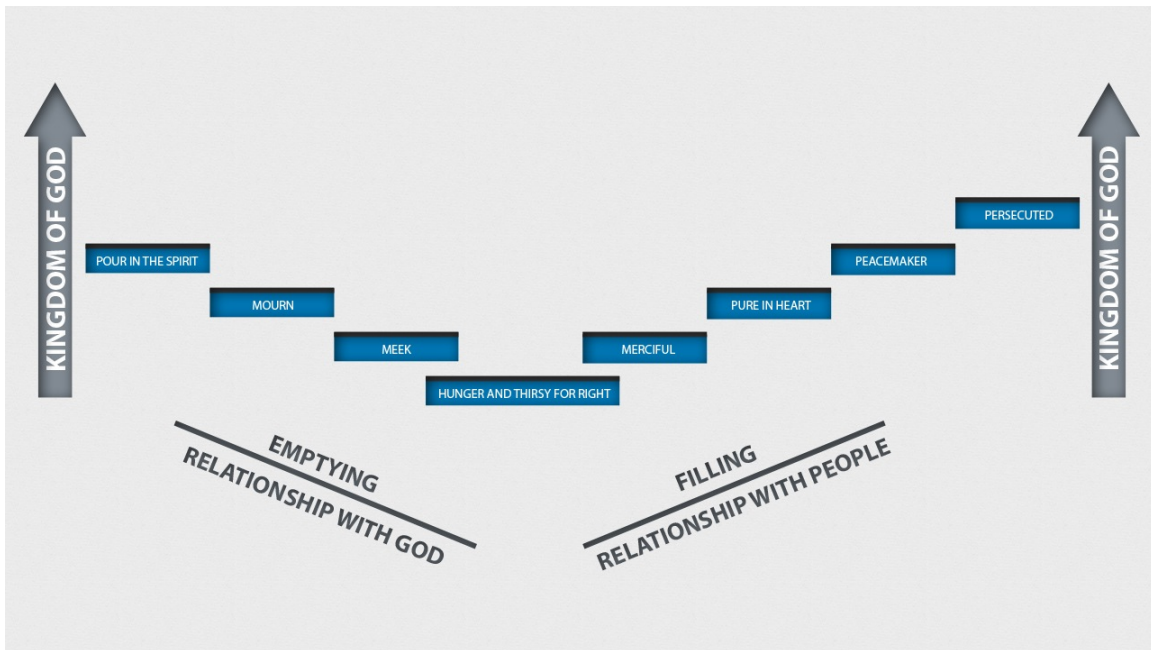
B. Why would I bring this up to begin a sermon on the Beatitudes?

1. Because I love it when secular research proves a foundational biblical truth.

¹ HarperBusiness 2001. Collins also wrote another classic entitled *Built To Last* (with Jerry Porras).

² A United States Navy vice admiral and one of the most-highly decorated officers in the history of the U.S. Navy.

2. Also, Collins' Principle #3, including the Stockdale Paradox, is a concise and excellent description of the Beatitudes [read it again?]
- C. The Beatitudes are THE most profound section in the whole Bible for self-examination and analysis. If we really want to see our own heart for what it is, then we must look closely at the Beatitudes -- they are intended to help us confront the most brutal facts of our current reality.



- D. I don't want to be an average superficial Christian – or pastor an average superficial church.
1. Much of contemporary Christianity is, unfortunately, superficial.
 2. I don't want us to be like so many believers that can speak "Christianese" but remain desensitized to deep spiritual truth, thinking that we understand when we do not -- and living an existence that is functionally no different than the average "good citizen."
 3. The answer to our lazy cultural Christianity is an honest and humble interaction with the Beatitudes, which we have been saying is the unlikely route to joy.
- E. It has been correctly stated that it is vital that WE READ the Bible, but real change, real transformation happens when we let the Bible READ US.
- F. *"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth."* --Matthew 5:5

II. BODY

Copyright © 2015 Gregg Caruso, King's Harbor Church. All rights reserved. We encourage you to use and share this material freely—but please don't charge money for it, change the wording, or remove the copyright information.

- A. What does *meekness*, or *gentleness*, mean? (In the original Greek language the word for *meek* comes from the same root word as the word *gentle*, which is one of the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Gal 5:22-23)
- B. It's been said that, "Meekness is one of the most misunderstood words in the English language."³
- C. We will look at: 1) What meekness is NOT, 2) What meekness is, and 3) How do we become meek?

1. **What meekness is not:**

- a. Meekness does not mean weakness. It is not cowardice, or spinelessness, or timidity, or "peace at any price" behavior, or indecisiveness, or wishy-washy, or lack of confidence, or shyness.
- b. When we understand what *meekness* is NOT we can begin to understand what meekness is.

2. **What meekness is:**

- a. If we were to track the underlying idea of *meekness* throughout classical literature we would find it is used to describe:
 - 1) A tamed animal (as in to "break" or "gentle" a horse)
 - 2) A healing medicine
 - 3) A gentle breeze
- b. One theologian describes meekness as, "A word with a caress in it."⁴ --William Barclay
- c. Matthew 5:5: "*Blessed be mild men.*" -- William Tyndale's Translation⁵ Not WILD men, but MILD men.
- d. So, this begins to indicate a description, or definition: The **power** (of a wild stallion) **under control** (or, that has been gentled by the Master).
- e. "A complete absence of the spirit of retaliation."⁶ --Martyn Lloyd-Jones

³ *Life in the Spirit New Testament Commentary*: 151.

⁴ William Barclay, *A New Testament Word Book*.

⁵ Wycliffe Bible Translation also.

⁶ *Studies In the Sermon on the Mount*: 70.

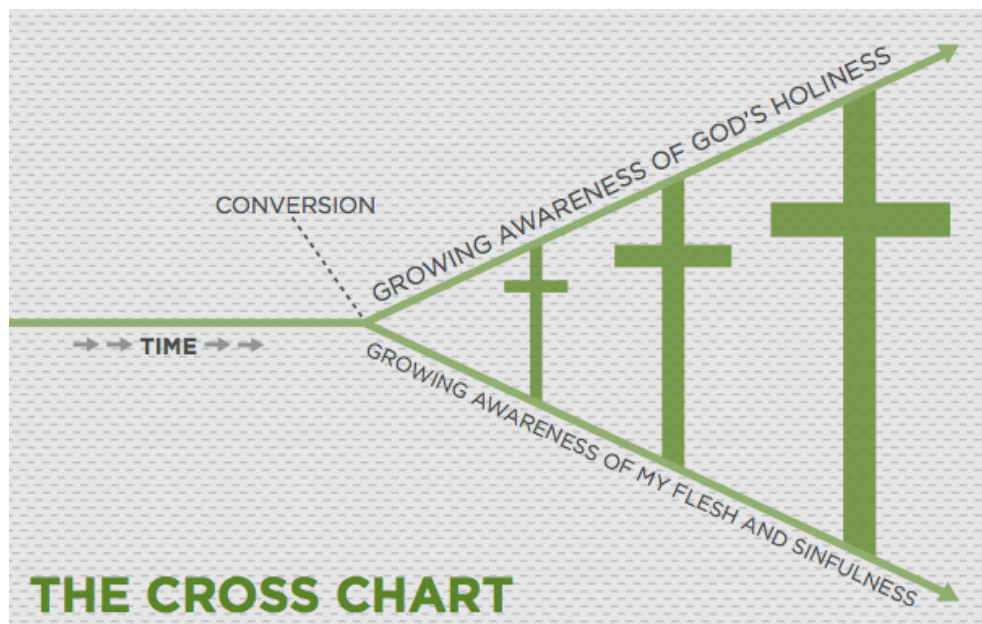
f. Here is my definition of *meekness*: A humble learner. The eyes of our heart have been awakened. Remember, disciple means learner.

3. **How do we become meek (or, humble learners)?** Like the Beatitudes, it's cyclical. (Four points...)

a. As I mentioned, *meekness* comes from the same root word as the fruit of the Spirit *gentleness*, so to begin, **Meekness is ultimately the fruit of growing personal relationship with Jesus** (so becoming meek should not be a goal, it is a fruit). God has to give it.

b. **We are to see the beautiful progression of the Beatitudes**, which nurture us toward meekness (and beyond).

- 1) The first Beatitude (Mat 5:3) is being awakened to our own spiritual poverty. Admitting we do not have the spiritual resources necessary to carry out God's requirements.
- 2) Acknowledging our spiritual poverty positions us to engage the 2nd Beatitude (Mat 5:4) of mourning over both the corruption in my own heart and well as the corruption in the broken world around me.
 - a) A growing awareness of my spiritual poverty will, if I look up, produce in me a growing awareness of God's majesty, beauty, and holiness.



Copyright © 2015 Gregg Caruso, King's Harbor Church. All rights reserved. We encourage you to use and share this material freely—but please don't charge money for it, change the wording, or remove the copyright information.

- b) These two Beatitudes will prepare the soil in our hearts for us to become meek.
- c) "It is when we notice the [sin in our lives] that God is most present in us; it is the very sign of His presence." –C.S. Lewis⁷

c. **Our meekness will be tested and refined through criticism.**

- 1) "The man who is truly meek is the one who is amazed that God and man can think of him as well as they do and treat him as well as they do."⁸ -- Martyn Lloyd Jones
- 2) Then he goes on to suggest a test: "It is one thing to say about yourself, 'There is nothing to commend me to God,' but the REAL test is when someone else says that about you." How do we respond (or react)?
- 3) Criticism: "No leader is exempt from criticism, and one's humility will nowhere be seen more clearly than in the manner in which one accepts and reacts to it. Samuel Brengle, who was noted for his sense of genuine holiness, had been subjected to caustic criticism. Instead of replying in kind or resorting to self-justification, he replied: 'From my heart I thank you for your rebuke. I think I deserved it. Will you, my comrade, remember me in prayer?' On another occasion, a biting, censorious attack was made on his spiritual life. His answer was: 'I thank you for your criticism of my life. It set me to self-examination and heart-searching and prayer, which always leads me into a deeper sense of my utter dependence on Jesus for holiness of heart, and into sweeter fellowship with Him⁹.'"

d. Finally, **Meekness comes through being "yoked" to Jesus** (which, really, takes us back to point #1 – it is a fruit).

- 1) Consider: "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ **Take My yoke** upon you

⁷ *The Collected Letters of C.S. Lewis, Volume II.*

⁸ *Studies In the Sermon on the Mount: 69-70.*

⁹ Sanders J. Oswald. *Spiritual Leadership*, Moody Press: 120.

and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” --Matthew 11:28-29

- 2) As we yoke ourselves to Jesus we will learn the spiritual quality of *meekness*.
 - a) In biblical times when a young ox needed to be trained they would yoke it to an older, more experienced ox to learn the proper pace, responsiveness, and behaviors.
 - b) The qualities of the experienced animal would begin to rub off on the inexperienced animal.
- 3) Meekness grows in our lives as we are yoked, or submitted, to Jesus – then a progression takes place in our lives, which comes by grace.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Finally, KHC, I will say it again, let’s not settle for average, superficial, westernized Christianity. Let’s do business with God and allow Him to confront us as needed (individually and as a church) with the brutal facts of our current reality.
- B. In CS Lewis’ celebrated children’s book, *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*¹⁰ the Christ character is Aslan the Lion.
 1. One of the young characters, Susan, asks Mr. & Mrs. Beaver, “Is [Aslan] safe?”
 2. To which Mr. Beaver replies, “Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king I tell you.”

¹⁰ HarperCollins, 2002: (Can’t remember, near the beginning of Chap 8).