

# How to Enter Into the Kingdom

by Skip Heitzig

---

*The first step to enter the kingdom of God is to be poor in spirit, recognizing one's spiritual poverty and relying on God's mercy and grace.*

**Duration:** 54:53

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:3-9

**Topics:** "Kingdom Of God"

---

## Description

In this sermon titled 'How to Enter into the Kingdom,' Pastor Skip Heitzlich explores the concept of entering into the kingdom of God. He begins by contrasting the outward appearance of individuals with their true nature, using examples from a movie and the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. He emphasizes the importance of recognizing our need for God's mercy and humbly seeking His forgiveness. The sermon is based on Matthew chapter 5, specifically verses 3 and 4, and encourages listeners to approach God with a humble heart in order to enter into His kingdom.

---

## Transcript

This is tape number 0807 by Pastor Skip Heitzik, entitled How to Enter into the Kingdom, from Matthew chapter 5, verses 3 and 4. Good to be back with you. You know, this is my home church, and every time I come back I think of Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz. There's no place like home.

And it's always good to be here. Greg will be back next week. He's in England this week.

And tonight we have the opportunity to look at a portion of Scripture you're probably all familiar with. If not, you will be soon. Let's turn to Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount.

I'm going to make a request as we begin tonight. It's a request I know that is made often from this pulpit, and so I know I'm right in line. And that is, now that the service has begun, this portion, the teaching portion, we ask everyone in the auditorium to remain seated for the duration of the study.

Now, it's going to be a four-hour Bible study. No, I'm just kidding. But in all seriousness, the reason for that is, is because the Holy Spirit, we believe, speaks through His Word.

And while He's doing that, He may just have the right portion for the right person at the right time. And nobody wants to be a distraction to that. To get up and move around can be distracting, and so we like to keep that kind of decorum and focus on the Word of God.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You tonight for this opportunity to gather together in a free country to worship, to sing, to express our hearts, the burdens, the joys, and then to study Your Word and get clear direction from Your Spirit for our lives. Lord, I pray for everyone who has come and is listening by radio that You would speak through Your Word clearly, appropriately, that You would bring some into Your kingdom tonight, Lord, those who are hedging on their decision, those who are in a backslidden state or are running from You.

We believe that You brought everyone here for a divine purpose, and we can't wait to see that fruit. In Jesus' name, amen. Let's look at Matthew chapter 5 and read a few verses, and then we'll pick just a couple of them.

And seeing the multitudes, he went up on a mountain, and when he was seated, his disciples came to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now blessed means happy, and I think that of all the emotions that we possess as humans, perhaps happiness is the most elusive of them.

We are guaranteed the right in our constitution to pursue happiness, and yet, how many people do you really know that are truly happy in your estimation? Well, God gives the description, the character, of a truly satisfied, a happy individual. In other words, he is saying, if you really want satisfaction in life, this is how you get it. Here's how it comes.

Here's the package. I was reading a report where one group says that people who are not satisfied with their lives increase their risk for premature death by 10%. That's a staggering statistic.

Of course, Solomon said the same thing about 3,000 years ago. He wrote these words in Proverbs 17, a cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries the bones. If you ask people what it would take to make them happy, I bet you'd get a number of responses, wouldn't you? Everybody has their idea.

If I only could have that car, I'd be happy. If I could only make this much money, I'd be happy. If only I could live in that place, I'd be happy.

If only I could marry so-and-so, I'd be happy. If only I wouldn't have married so-and-so, maybe I'd be happy. It would vary depending on who you ask.

There were three fellows talking about the meaning of life and true happiness. One was British, the other was French, and the other was a Russian. The British began and he said, happiness is when you come home from a hard day's work and you have your slippers warmed by the fire.

The Frenchman said, you British are so unromantic. Happiness is a fine meal with a beautiful woman in a great restaurant. The Russian said, you're both wrong.

Happiness is being in your own bed, in your own home, and at two in the morning you get knocked on the door and it's the secret police and they say, Ivan Ivanovich, you're under arrest. And you say, Ivan Ivanovich, he lives next door. Now, I do find it sad and rather ironic that a good number of people connect Christianity with anything but happiness.

Their idea of a Christian would be someone who is sullen, someone who really doesn't have the direction that he should have in his or her life. They see Christianity as something that saps the true meaning and the flavor out of life. I think of Oliver Wendell Holmes who said, quote, I would have entered the ministry except all of the clergymen that I know look and act so much like undertakers.

Or Robert Louis Stevenson who wrote in his daily journal as if it was an incredible thing. He said, I went to church today and I'm not depressed. Now, God didn't write those rules and yet so many people equate Christianity with something other than true happiness.

Jesus uses the word several times, blessed. The poor in spirit, blessed are those that mourn. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness.

The word blessed means, oh, how fortunate, oh, how happy, oh, how blissful is this person. He's not speaking about a surface emotion but an inward contentedness of someone who says, oh, I found the true purpose and meaning in life and here's the experience and the characteristics of that person. How different these characteristics are from the view of this world.

Would the world say blessed are the poor in spirit? Would the world say blessed are those who are persecuted? No, the world wouldn't say that at all. In fact, the world would say blessed are the wealthy, blessed are the prosperous, blessed are the healthy, blessed are the tanned, blessed are the popular. They would not equate these things with the stuff that makes up for happiness.

Tonight, I want to draw your attention to the first two Beatitudes. They're found in verses three and four and this is really the beginning of it all. In fact, these two verses tell us how to enter the kingdom of God.

Jesus has a lot to say about the kingdom in these chapters. This is what the kingdom of God is. This is what the people who live in it are like.

The first two Beatitudes say this is how you get into the kingdom. These are the Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. There's probably no set of statements that shows how different the philosophy of Jesus is from the philosophy of the world than these two statements. This would absolutely make no sense to somebody who's not a Christian.

In fact, the things that we just read are signs of weakness to people who don't know Christ. The emphasis and the focus of the world is on self-confidence, self-reliance. If you're taught to be a salesman, they teach you to have confidence.

Sell yourself. Sell the product. Have a confident voice, a confident demeanor.

Shake the person's hand. Use his name frequently. People love to hear their name they say.

And you can sell anything with the right attitude and say their name. George, do you know this can opener can change your life? I bet you do, don't you, George? Confidence, reliance. Those are the things that

matter.

Climbing the corporate ladder. What if you were to go try to get a job and you said to your employer when he asked or your possible employer, well, why do you think I should hire you? What if you were to sort of hang your head and say, well, I have lots of faults and needs and I admit I'm a sinner. I can mourn and I'm poor in spirit.

He would say, next. Now, I know this isn't news to you, but a lot of people today say the real problem with humanity at large is a lack of self-esteem. We need to love ourselves much more.

And once we do, everything will be okay. For instance, listen to this little advertisement I found in a psychology today. Quote, I love me.

I am not conceited. I'm just a good friend to myself. And I like to do whatever makes me feel good.

Or let's go way out on a limb. Listen to Shirley MacLaine, what she says. Quote, the most pleasurable journey you take is through yourself.

The only sustaining love involvement is with yourself. When you look back on your life and you try to figure out where you've been, where you're going, when you look at your work, your love affairs, your marriages, your children, your pain, your happiness, when you examine all of that closely, what you really find out is that the only person you really go to bed with is yourself. The only thing you have is working to the consummation of your own identity.

And that's what I've been trying to do all my life. No doubt. But what does it mean to be poor in spirit? And why is that the first step in entering the kingdom of God? Well, it helps to know what the word means exactly.

The word poor means poverty stricken. That's a better translation. Blessed are the abject poverty stricken ones.

Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. In fact, it's a very, very strong word that means to shrink, to cower, or to cringe. It describes a destitute beggar.

In classical Greek, it described a person who had his hand out. And the other hand, he covered his eyes, his face, because he was ashamed that he was a beggar. That's the word that Jesus uses here.

Blessed are the destitute in spirit. Now, I think that this is a misunderstood verse of scripture. Some have misapplied it by mistranslating it.

And I've heard it put this way. Blessed in spirit are the poor. That's not what Jesus is saying.

He's not saying that blessed are those who are materially poor, though we all know that those who lack often aren't faced with the same temptations or distractions with people or compared to people that have lots of stuff. But the idea isn't become penniless. Otherwise, verses in the Sermon on the Mount wouldn't make sense.

Look at verse 42, for example. Jesus says, give to him who asks you. Well, you have to have something to give to give.

And from him who wants to borrow, do not turn away. So Christians are to give financial help to those in need. And if the goal were to become penniless and he's saying blessed in spirit are those who are materially poor, that verse of scripture wouldn't make sense.

This is being poor in spirit, not in wallet necessarily. It's a spiritual kind of a poverty. Nor is Jesus speaking of false humility.

You know what I mean by false humility? There are some people who think that you are blessed if you go out of your way to show people how humble you are. It's really a sign of pride to walk around and say, well, I don't know. I'm really no good.

I don't think I could ever do that. I can't sing. I can't play guitar.

I could never speak. I can't even tie my shoes. That is not humility.

That's just weirdness. That's all that is. In fact, as I said, it's a form of pride because usually those things are shared to engender a response so that you say, I really am no good.

You want the other person to say, oh, really you are. You're awesome. Really? You think so? And that is a sinful approach to life.

For God thinks you're important enough to send his son to die on the cross for you to shed his blood to redeem you so that you could enter the kingdom. That's pretty awesome. So it's not false humility.

What is it then to be poor in spirit? Simply this. It's when you recognize your spiritual poverty before God. You are bankrupt.

You have nothing in your own account. You cannot merit God's salvation. You can't earn God's salvation.

You can't make any claim and say, well, let me tell you a few things, God. I've done this, this and this, and I deserve heaven. No, it's where you realize I have nothing.

As the hymn says, nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross, I cling. That is being poor in spirit. The poor in spirit realize they have no saving resources.

And no matter who we are, no matter how wealthy you are tonight, no matter how educated you are tonight, no matter how much you know about religious or spiritual things, everyone is bankrupt before God, which leads us to stand before the cross and beg for mercy. None of this I deserve, but to say, oh God, by your mercy, by an act of your grace, that's how we enter the kingdom. Here's another way to look at it.

To be poor in spirit is to simply see yourself in the light of God. You see an honest evaluation of who you are as you see yourself in the presence of God. Example, Isaiah the prophet.

Now prophets are pretty spiritual. In fact, Isaiah the prophet was a spiritual enough guy that he saw a vision of God. He saw the temple in his vision filled with the glory of God, God sitting upon the throne, the doorposts shaking, the angels hovering, praising the Lord.

And he said, woe is me, I am undone. I'm a man of unclean lips. Now perhaps if we heard that we'd say, now wait a minute, you're Isaiah the prophet.

You're pretty special. You're amazing. What do you mean I'm unclean? Because he saw himself in the presence of God.

That's why. Another example, Peter. Peter was aggressive.

He was self-assertive in the New Testament. He thought he was pretty special. He thought he was a good fisherman.

Remember the time when Jesus said, Peter, we're going to go out and go fishing, launch out into the deep. And Peter says, Lord, we have fished all night and we have caught nothing. In other words, Jesus, I live here.

I work on this lake. Everybody knows the best time to fish is at night, not in the middle of the day. We've already tried the lake.

Not good fishing right now. This would be the worst time. But he humored Jesus.

Let's go fishing. He's a preacher. We'll go.

They went out and you remember the story. The nets were so full of fish, they began to break. And what did Peter say? Depart from me.

I am a sinful man. Depart from me. I am a sinful man.

Wait a minute. Before it was, I am Peter, the great fisherman. Now it's, I'm Peter, the sinful man.

What happened? He fished with Jesus. That's what happened. He realized, I'm in the presence of God.

This is no ordinary being. And seeing who God is, I now see who I am. And it humbles me.

I bow low. That's the first step to enter the kingdom, by bending low. How do you bend low? You see who you really are, in light of who God really is.

And whenever you are in the presence of God, and you realize just who you're dealing with, that has a tendency to strip away any facade we have, any veneer that we have put on, to get real with ourselves and to get real with God. You know what pride is like? By the way, pride keeps lots of people out of the kingdom of God. There's a lot of people who will say, when you share the truth with them, I'm good enough.

I'm not all that bad. And that's pride. Pride is like taking a telescope and turning it the wrong way.

What happens when you look through a telescope that way? The other side gets small, doesn't it? And what happens with pride is it magnifies myself and it minifies God. To be poor in spirit is to turn the telescope the right way. And you see God, who he really is, magnified, awesome.

And you see yourself as small. That's being poor in spirit. And that is why so many religious people are so hard to reach with the gospel, because they think they're good enough.

They won't bend low enough. Now some of you have been to Israel, and if you have been to Israel, you remember one very interesting church in Bethlehem. What makes it so interesting isn't the church as much as the entrance.

The door to the church is only four foot tall. And they designed it for a purpose, not just to keep animals out in ancient times, but so that everybody who goes to the doors of that church, even the most astute atheist, would have to bow as he goes in. That's how you enter the kingdom of God.

You don't enter the kingdom of God by being tall in pride, but by in humility bowing low. I think of people like Martin Luther and Saint Augustine, who said it was their pride that once kept them away from God. They were proud that they were of good stock.

Proud that they were so smart, intellectual. Proud that they had good position and finances in life. What happened? They had to admit that they were a sinner.

That they needed God to cleanse them. There was even a church in the New Testament that needed a good dose of being poor in spirit. It was the church of Laodicea.

Remember Jesus said to them, I wish that you were cold or hot, but you're not. You're lukewarm. What happened? In their pride, they failed to depend on God.

Now listen to what Jesus says to that particular church. He writes to them. He indicts them.

He says, it's because you say, I am rich. I've become wealthy. I have need of nothing.

You do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Their assessment of who they were, Jesus' assessment of who they were, were worlds apart. They thought, we're good enough.

Jesus says, you've got a long way to go. I'm rich, you're poor. I'm awesome, you need to bow lower.

Pride keeps us from depending upon God. I have always wondered at that particular scripture, by the way. Jesus said, I wish that you were cold or hot, not lukewarm.

It sort of bothered me because I think Jesus should say, I wish that you were hot, not cold, not lukewarm, but red hot, burning red hot for me. He said, my wish is that you were either cold or hot. I'm thinking, Jesus, why would you say that to them? Simply for this reason, when you're cold, at least you know it.

When you're shivering in the cold, at least you are driven to seek for warmth. When you're lukewarm, you think, no, I don't need a coat. I'll be fine.

When you're cold, you want to get warm. Listen to what G. Campbell Morgan once said, quote, there is more hope for the man outside the church in all of his coldness than for the man within the church who is near enough to its warmth to appreciate it and far enough from its burning heat to be useless to God and man. There is a greater chance for the non-believer who has not heard the gospel than for the man who has become an evangelized non-believer.

There's many religious people who are not in the kingdom of God for this reason. They haven't bent low enough. You might say they have been inoculated with a mild form of religion so as to be rendered immune from the real thing.

They have just enough to make them feel comfortable, but not enough to really get them low enough to enter the kingdom. So the first qualification to enter the kingdom of God is to be poor in spirit. It's not to say, I'm okay, you're okay, but to be low enough, to be humble enough to admit your needs.

Remember the prodigal son? He was out eating with the pigs and he decided to come home to his father. Did he say, you know, I'm going to go fix myself up, pull myself up by my bootstrap and convince my dad to accept me. You know what he said? He said, I'm going to go back to my father and say I'm not even worthy to be called your son.

And it was that humility that drove his father to him and said, oh, welcome home. Welcome home. I heard a story about an artist who wanted to paint a portrait of the prodigal son.

The only problem is he needed the right model. Who could I use to paint the prodigal son? He went out and searched the streets and he found a beggar. Disheveled, dirty, torn clothes.

He approached him and said, I'm an artist. I'd like to paint the prodigal son. I'd like to use you as the model.

I will pay you handsomely if you come to my studio tomorrow. Well, the next day, a well-shaven, groomed, cleaned man came to the studio and the artist said, you are who? He said, I am the beggar that you said to come. I thought if I'm going to get painted, I should clean myself up and look good for the picture.

And, of course, the artist said, you are of no value to me now. I was painting the beggar. And so to enter the kingdom of God, to be poor in spirit, is to make that admission.

Then we come to the second beatitude, and this is the second step. The first step is by bending low, and the second step to entering the kingdom is, you might say, by being lamentable. Mourning, Jesus said, blessed are those who mourn, they shall be comforted.

Notice it does not say, blessed are those who moan. I have a plaque in my office that says, thou shalt not whine. It's not blessed are those who moan, but those who mourn.

Which is a paradox, is it not? Does that make much sense? Oh, how happy! Oh, to be congratulated! Oh, to be envied are those who mourn! Oh, how happy are the unhappy! That's what it sounds like it's saying. To the world, once again, this seems utterly ridiculous. For if you ask the world, how do you get happy, they would say, never get yourself into a position where you experience pain and mourning.

You don't ever want to have to mourn. Happiness and mourning cannot coexist. Avoid pain, avoid trouble, avoid disappointment.

Why, there's even a movement afoot in the churches today called the holy laughter movement. It's now holy to have a spiritual laughing party together. And I think of this verse, and I think maybe it's more appropriate to have a little more holy mourning over sin, over our spiritual condition, to enter the kingdom of heaven.

By the way, the word, once again, that Jesus used for mourn is the strongest word he could have used. There are, get this, nine different Greek words for mourn. This is the strongest.

It literally means a heartfelt grief, a deep inner agony. Usually, it's a word reserved for somebody who's lost somebody to death. And they grieve and they mourn over the loss of that life.

We all know that sorrow is commonplace, and we also know, I think, that some sorrow is necessary, right? Life isn't always a smiling session. There's low points as well as high points, and it's necessary to balance out life. I love the old Arab proverb that says, all sunshine makes a desert.

I think that's true in life. I think that the disappointments, the losses, the pain, the mourning is sometimes necessary in life. I think it's a very shallow life that tries to avoid pain altogether or has very little pain.

You've all met people, Christians, who have walked with Jesus Christ through great loss, great sorrow, and they still trust God. And when you're in their presence, it's like, wow, this person is different. No shallowness here.

There's some depth here. Why? Because that person has walked with Jesus through the valleys as well as the mountains. Real depth, depth of character.

Maybe you can relate to this poem by Robert Browning Hamilton. I walked a mile with pleasure. She chattered all the way.

But left me none the wiser for all she had to say. But I walked a mile with sorrow. And never a word, said she, but oh, the things I learned from her as sorrow walked with me.

You learn during those times. You learn to appreciate the uptime. You learn how to comfort those who really need it as well.

But what Jesus refers to here is spiritual mourning. It's not just blessed are those who are sad. It's a spiritual mourning, just as the poverty he spoke about was a spiritual poverty.

This is now mourning over that condition of being bankrupt before God. It's where I realize I'm destitute. God, I'm bankrupt.

I can't earn my salvation. I can't offer you anything, but I still want to enter the kingdom. And so I mourn over my condition.

That's really what this means here. Think about David. King David, who wrote the Psalms, had so many episodes in his life where he mourned, he cried, he was down.

Whether it was the loss of his infant son, whether it was the loss of Absalom, his son, whether it was just a period of depression or disappointment. But David's heart was never broken like it was over his own sin. Psalm 51 records a depth of grieving over his sin before God.

He says, for I know my transgression and my sin is always before me against you and you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, created me a clean heart, O God. You see, that's a mourning over the sinful condition that I realize that's the opposite of pride. I'd like you to turn to a portion of scripture to get an example.

Turn right. Go to Luke and go to Luke chapter 18. It's an example that comes from Jesus himself about two people that went to approach God.

Luke chapter 18, verse nine. And he spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. He said two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself. God, I thank you that I'm not like other men. And he explains what he means.

Extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector, I fast twice a week. I give tithes of all that I possess. And the tax collector standing afar off would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

Notice Jesus' commentary. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted. Powerful.

If we were to look at those two men coming into the temple to worship, by looking at their outward appearance, we would think, okay, there's a Pharisee. He gives his whole life to studying the law, to praying, to being righteous. Well, there's a tax collector.

And we all know that the Jews and the tax collectors don't get along. He's probably very unrighteous. It's so like us to judge by outward appearance.

And yet what's underneath may be so different. You may remember a movie. It came out a few years back.

It's now become a fairytale classic. It was called Prince's Bride. There's a scene in it that illustrates this very well.

In a particular scene, it's the marriage scene. It's the wedding scene. And the bride and the groom are standing at the altar to be saying their vows.

And the camera zooms in on the minister, the vicar, the guy with the big hat and the staff and the robes. And he has thick eyebrows and deep chiseled features. And as it comes in and he's about to speak, you think by looking at him that he's going to have this deep, resonating voice.

But then he opens his mouth and he says, marriage, marriage is what brings us together today. Now, if you've seen that movie, you remember that scene and everybody cracks up at that scene because it's not what they'd expect. They expect somebody with that deep voice.

The outward appearance is so different from what they hear. There's a Pharisee. He goes up and he sounds so spiritual because he has a couple of lists, a negative list and a positive list.

This is what I don't do, God. And this is what I do. These are my good works.

As if to say, I'm a good catch. I'm pretty special. I have a lot to offer you, God.

But on the other hand, yes, there's a tax collector. Yes, he probably gouged the poor in his lifetime and was quite a notorious sinner. But he doesn't say I have anything to offer.

He beats his breast, wouldn't raise his eyes, and he simply stands begging the mercy of God. God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Jesus said, bingo.

He went to his house justified. Why? Because he admitted his need. He was poor in spirit.

He mourned over his condition. Thus, he was justified. The first guy, the religious guy, didn't admit that he had any need, would not bow low, would not mourn over his condition.

And Jesus said, he is not justified. So that's the reason, to enter the kingdom of God, you have to be poor in spirit. And then second comes mourning.

Poverty of spirit brings sorrow over my condition. And if you put poor in spirit and mourning together, you have another New Testament word, repentance. It's a good definition of repentance.

Repent is a word that means, as many of you know, to turn around, to change your direction. You change your direction in your mind, in your heart. And then you change your direction in your life.

You make a decision. I'm not going to follow my own ways anymore, my own plans, my own schemes. I'm going to turn around and I'm going to make a choice.

And in my mind, in my heart, I make a choice to follow Jesus and to go His way and not go my way anymore. I belong to Him now. That's repentance.

And then that's followed up with a lifestyle. But it comes by the admission and then it comes by that spiritual mourning. Another good example is found in the book of Corinthians.

Paul writes a letter to the church at Corinth. They were haughty. There were some problems.

And he writes a very strong letter. And then he follows it up with an explanation in 2 Corinthians. Listen, he says, now I'm happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance.

For you became sorrowful as God intended, and so you were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret. But the worldly sorrow brings death.

See what this godly sorrow has produced in you, what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves. My wife in her younger years was raised to be an atheist. Her father would tuck her in bed at night and tell her clever parables of why God doesn't exist.

The opposite of how Christians tuck their children in bed at night. And all of the morals of the stories were, honey, you got to pick yourself up, do it yourself. Nobody will do it for you.

He was radically converted here in Southern California. God got a hold of his life. He was a physician, a surgeon here in Orange County.

He gave his life to Christ and was baptized by Chuck Smith down in the ocean one evening. Called up my wife. She wasn't my wife then, but called her up and said, honey, I've become a Christian.

And she thought, oh, my dad's flipped. He's very intelligent. He doesn't do this unless he's under lots of stress or he's really thought this out.

And it's a very intelligent decision. And so she decided she would do what he did, but she didn't know exactly what he did. So she found a little tract.

Somebody gave her one. She looked through it and it was several pictures that talked about you're on the throne of your life. And if you really want happiness, you get off the throne and put Jesus on the throne.

And when Jesus is on the throne, all the good things in life that should happen will fall into place. She really misinterpreted the gospel. So she said, OK, Jesus, you know, get up there on the throne and now I'm going to wait around and and find all the good stuff that's going to happen.

That was her supposed conversion. Well, she comes to church here one Sunday. Chuck is speaking, and, you know, when Chuck speaks, it's that 500 watt smile.

It's like, wow, it's great love, joy. And the whole sermon as he was preaching his heart out with great love and joy, she was sitting in one of these pews and she felt so isolated, so alienated, so unhappy she didn't quite get it. And so she went to the prayer room after the service and talked to a pastor and the pastor simply asked her as she explained her experience, have you repented? And she said, have I repented? I haven't even pented.

How could I repent? I don't even know what that means. And so he explained what repentance is. You have to admit that you're a sinner.

You have to ask God to forgive you. You're sorry for it. And you want him to give you a brand new life, a brand new start.

Have you done that? She goes, I've never done that. Would you like to do it? I'd love to do it. That's New Testament repentance.

And yet, though repentance was the first message preached in the New Testament by John the Baptist, though repentance was the first message Jesus ever preached, many churches today don't preach it. I thank God for this church. It preaches the true gospel as long as it's been around.

But many churches don't. Why? Well, repentance isn't popular. A lot of people don't believe in personal sin.

You've heard the excuses. Okay, look, man, I'm not perfect, but I'm not as bad as a lot of people. I mean, there's murderers out there and there's rapists and there's really bad people.

They need to repent. But, you know, okay, I'm not perfect, but I'm not as bad as they are. And God must grade on a curve.

So I'll be all right. Not only that, but it's a threatening message. And some churches think, well, if we tell people to repent, they may be offended.

They might not come back to our church and give us money. And so they will refrain. But notice what Jesus says to those people who will truly change, repent, mourn, they shall be what? Comforted.

That's the good part. The world says, pick up your troubles in your old kit bag and smile, smile, smile. Whereas Jesus says, confess your sins and mourn, mourn, mourn.

And when you do, you'll have a reason to smile. You'll be truly comforted. You'll be changed from the inside out.

You'll be relieved of the burden of sin once and for all. So tonight you can respond to your spiritual bankruptcy in a few different ways. Number one, you can be like the Pharisee.

You can say, well, I just thank God. I'm not like a lot of other people. There's some really bad characters out there.

And I'm just glad I'm better than some of them. Number two, you can say, well, I admit I'm not all that I'm supposed to be. I could be a lot better.

I have sinned. And so from tonight onward, I'm going to do it myself. I have some great self-help books at home and I'm going to change myself.

I'm going to turn over a new leaf. It's a lose-lose situation. The best way, the Jesus way, the biblical way, is to be poor in spirit and mourn, to enter the kingdom by bowing low, to say there's nothing that I have to offer you, God.

I beg your mercy. Please be merciful to me. Please accept me on the basis of what your son Jesus did for me, not what I could do.

One of my favorite books written some time ago was written by Charles Colson. It's a book called Loving God. And in it, he writes a great story, a Bible story, the thieves on the cross next to Jesus.

They're both dying. Well, he gives names to the thieves on the cross. The guy who failed to repent, he calls Jacob.

To the one who says, Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom, he calls David. And he imagines the full conversation of what went on and fills it in along with the biblical narrative. Here's a couple paragraphs.

David moved his head to look at Jesus again. The movement caused excruciating pain and blood slammed through his head and the pressure that he applied to his feet to hold his balance caused the nail to tear higher into his flesh. This time, Jesus' eyes looked right into his.

What made his face so inviting? David had never before seen innocence combined with wisdom. Usually, a man was wise from bad experience and therefore hardly innocent or innocent but foolish, therefore not wise. David turned his eyes away.

He could not look at this good man. For that face called up things David did not want to remember. There's so much in my life to be ashamed of, he thought.

Then immediately, he rejected that thought. No, no, I have done no wrong unless it's wrong to want to be free. I don't deserve to die.

Though it cost him great pain, he moved his head to look at Jesus again. He said he's the son of God, he thought. Why doesn't he say something to these mockers now? Curse them.

Why not leave their consciences, if they have any, with his curses? Curse those who curse you. But the face that he looked into was not printed with anger or hatred. The lips moved and David could hear him.

He was asking God to forgive them. David suddenly felt guilty, unclean, naked. I am ashamed of my life.

I'm ashamed of the hatred that's in me, he thought. Not because he hung there beaten, stripped, and condemned for all to see, but because he felt exposed before some higher power greater than any of these who had the power to kill him. Something more painful than the fire consuming his body began to burn within his soul.

Though he could barely gather strength or breath, David whispered what his heart was crying, Jesus, Jesus, remember me. Remember me when you come into your kingdom. And as though he had been waiting for that very plea, Jesus replied, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.

The darkness grew deeper, the human figure shadowy. Jesus twitched in a spasm leading to death and he made no cry, but spoke a few words to a woman standing beneath him, weeping, and the man she clung to, apparently one of his followers. Then he cried out words David could not understand.

The soldiers ran to a place and put a sponge to his lips. Then another loud cry, father, into your hands, I commit my spirit. And he slumped limp against the impaling bonds.

The darkness became thicker, the ground shook, the crowd fled. And now David was alone, utterly alone. Jesus was dead.

And all he had to hold on to in this endless dying was a promise that he was going to the same place Jesus had gone. But now he knew how to die. He had heard Jesus' last words.

Sounds filtered to him, soldiers talking. The priests want the bodies down before sunset. They were asking the soldiers to break the legs so the men would die immediately.

Hearing the brutal discussion going on before him, David thought again, how cruelly men treat each other. But then came a new thought. If I were in their position, I'd be doing the same thing.

There was only one person he could not picture acting out that brutality, and he was the son of God. Barely able to see now, David watched the hazy form of a soldier take a large iron axe and walk to Jacob's cross. With a powerful blow, he hit the man's shin with the flat side.

Jacob did not scream, just wriggled like a dying creature. The axe fell on the other leg. The soldier, surveying his work, seemed satisfied and turned and walked toward David.

David looked full into the soldier's face just below him. As the axe lifted, he closed his eyes and whispered, Jesus, into your hands, I commit my spirit. Two men equally as close to Jesus Christ, one saved, one lost.

One saying, get us off this cross. The other saying, remember me, Lord. Humbled himself, poor in spirit.

Both had the same opportunity. A few months ago, I was in a hospital room and I told a man this very story. He was an atheist, he said, didn't believe in God, self-sufficient, until he had cancer.

I witnessed to him. Franklin Graham had witnessed to him because he grew up partly with Franklin. And now in that hospital bed, he was resistant.

I said, let me tell you a story. The reason I told him this story is because he said, you have no idea about my past. You don't know the sins I've committed.

I said, I don't care about the sins you've committed, but I do care that Jesus knows and he's willing to forgive you. And I told him about the thief on the cross and how Jesus said, today you'll be with me in paradise. As I told him the story, his eyes welled up with tears.

He began to cry, sob. He said, those are the most beautiful words I've ever heard. You mean Jesus was willing to forgive him just like that? I said, yeah, and he'll forgive you just like that.

Well, that man did accept Christ. Tonight he's in heaven. Because he admitted, albeit in a very weak moment, but I believe God brought him to a place where he would say, okay, okay, God, I need your mercy.

Into your hands I commit my spirit. Some of you have come tonight and been invited by a friend or a relative, somebody who loves you enough to say, come to church with me tonight. I want you to hear something.

You've probably heard it from their lips. You've put it off. You've resisted.

Or you made a commitment some years back and then it didn't really connect. It didn't click. You haven't been really following Jesus.

It was just a raised hand or a shed tear at the moment, but not a change, not a repentant heart. Tonight, God has given you an opportunity to hear this message and to make a real stand and a choice to make Jesus savior and Lord of your life. We're going to give you that opportunity in just a minute, but let's pray.

Father, there's no safer place. There's no better place than in the hands of a loving savior. Lord, you love us so deeply, so eternally, so wonderfully that you would give your very best, your only son to come to this earth, to pour out his life for people who didn't even love him, care about him.

And you said, father, forgive them or tonight. That is your great desire to forgive people their sins, to wipe away the slate, to make it clean, to give them new hope and a new start. Or we pray for people who are gathered here in this auditorium or over in the gym or listening by radio.

And we believe Lord that you brought him here, not by accident, but by appointment, that you love them enough to bring them into your kingdom. We just pray that your spirit would work on their hearts, that they would bow low enough by simply admitting I'm a sinner. I need God's forgiveness, his mercy.

We pray Lord that you bring many into your kingdom tonight in Jesus name. Amen. Now I mentioned, I give you that opportunity.

You may never have another opportunity like this ever again. Now you might, but you know, you might not. And when God knocks at the door of your heart, you never want to say no.

You always want to say yes. So as the band sings this song, I'm going to ask those of you who are willing tonight to make a turn, a change of mind, a change of direction and turn your life over to Jesus Christ. I'm going to ask you to get up out of your seat and I'm going to ask you to find the nearest aisle.

And I'm going to lead you in a word of prayer to receive Christ. Or maybe you did it years ago, but it really wasn't meaningful or you haven't been walking with the Lord. I want you to come as well.

And we're going to lead you in a word of prayer, a real decision to follow Jesus. And you know what? You'll be blessed, happy as you do. So get up and come right now.

If you want to make that decision to follow Christ, we're going to give you that opportunity right now. Don't put it off. I know that God is still calling people.

People are still coming and. You know, I look at it this way. Some people are just more skilled at fighting God than others.

Others will say, uncle, a lot quicker and the quicker you do, the better. You might be one of those who you really know in your heart, you should be down here giving your life to Christ. But it's OK, I can handle this.

I feel the conviction of the spirit, but I'll deal with it, deal with it by yielding to him. Don't fight him any longer. He has your best interest at heart.

He loves you. He created you and he died on the cross for your sins. He wants to save you and give you life.

God is speaking to your heart. If you can sense the spirit moving inside, telling you to come clean the slate, you get down here. I'm going to extend the invitation just a little longer.

He knows my name. He knows I have been called and he knows me. He sees each tear that falls and he hears me when I call.

He knows my name. He knows I have been called and he knows me. He sees each tear that falls and he hears me when I call.

He knows my name. He knows I have been called and he hears me when I call. All right, this is awesome.

You know, this is a holy moment right now. So I would ask everyone in the auditorium to remain seated. When there's new birth in a birthing room, you don't walk out.

It's too exciting. And right now, several, so many people are here to ask Jesus to be their Savior and Lord. So we're going to pray with you.

And those of you who have come forward, you made the best choice, the wisest choice. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn. They shall be comforted. I'm going to lead you all in a word of prayer.

I'm going to say it out loud. I'd like you to repeat the prayer out loud after me. It's the best way we know to introduce you to Jesus Christ.

Say it and mean it from your heart. Say it to him. He will come in and forgive you.

Let's pray. Lord, I admit I'm a sinner and I ask you to forgive me. Thank you for Jesus dying for me on the cross.

I give you my whole life. I turn from my sin and I turn to you. I want to follow you as your disciple tonight and every day in Jesus' name.

Amen. Amen. This is the end of side two and the end of this message.

If you would like further information on tapes, contact Chapel Tapes at P.O. Box 8000, Costa Mesa, California 92628. Thank you and God bless you.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/5/SID5431.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/skip-heitzig/how-to-enter-into-the-kingdom/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**