

Notes - Compiled by Marc Bredenkamp

Life's Healing Choices – Part 2
The Hope Choice.

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Ezekiel 28:2 "In the pride of your heart you say, 'I am a god.' But you are just a man and not a god, though you think you are as wise as a god." (NIV)

Our oldest temptation is the temptation to play God. It goes all the way back to the garden of Eden when Adam was tempted to eat the fruit that God says this is the one choice I'm giving you - don't eat this. Then Satan comes and says, "If you eat this you'll be **a god, or like God, (Hebrew for this phrase - Elohiym – Supreme God, divine...)**!" We discovered that this is the root cause to many of the problems and sins that keep popping up in our lives, making us miserable and unhappy. We found out that it was **'playing God'**. When I act like I'm God and I'm going to make my choices instead of doing what God tells me to do, I'm going to have problems in my life. We are not God; God is God. We can be like Him, but we cannot be Him. If we were God, then we could sort everyone's problems out.

We began to look at the cure for these issues. We discovered the cure was to be found in the eight Beatitudes of Jesus. These are the first eight statements in the most famous sermon ever given. It's called the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is about to share what true righteousness is and the path to true happiness! The Pharisees taught that righteousness was an external thing, a matter of obeying rules and regulations. They taught that righteousness was a matter of external works. Righteousness could be measured by praying, giving, fasting, etc. In the Beatitudes and the pictures of the believer, Jesus described Christian character that flowed from within.

Imagine how the crowd's attention was riveted on Jesus when He uttered His first word: "Blessed." (**The Latin word for blessed is beatus, and from this comes the word beatitude.**) "**Blessed**" was a powerful word to those who heard Jesus that day. To them it meant "**divine joy and perfect happiness.**" The word was not used for humans; it described the kind of joy experienced only by the gods or the dead. "**Blessed**" implied an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that did not depend on outward circumstances for happiness. This is what the Lord offers those who trust and hope in Him! The Beatitudes describe the attitudes that ought to be in our lives today. (Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1989. The Bible exposition commentary. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"--Jkt. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill).

Jesus starts the Sermon on the Mount by basically saying, "I'm going to tell you eight ways to be blessed. The word "blessing" or "bless" in Greek is **makarismos**. **Makarismos** is the poetic form of the verb **makar**, which means in Greek "**happy.**" Of the two words which our translators render "blessed," the one here used points more to what is inward, and so might be rendered "happy," while the other denotes rather what comes to us from without (Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., Fausset, A. R., Brown, D., & Brown, D. 1997. A commentary, critical and explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments. On spine: Critical and explanatory commentary. Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA)

Jesus tells us, you'll be blessed if you do this... You'll be blessed if you do this... You'll be blessed if you do this... eight statements for getting rid of our habits, hurts and hang-ups that mess up our lives; eight choices that Jesus gives us to be inwardly happy. Some scholars render each beatitude as an exclamation: "O the bliss [or blessedness] of..." (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary) (Copyright (C) 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers) We could paraphrase the statements of Jesus on the Mount as follows: **'Oh the happiness of a person who is 'poor in spirit'; 'who is in mourning' etc.**

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

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The first Beatitude was the first healing choice; we called it '**The reality Choice**'. Recognizing that we need God's help, that we are spiritually helpless, spiritually poor without Him! We could identify with the Apostle Paul when he said the following.

Rom 7:15 + 18 "I don't understand what I do. What I want to do I don't do, but what I hate to do, I do! I know that nothing good lives in my sinful nature. I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out."

Life's second Healing Choice is Beatitude number two: '**The Hope Choice**'!

Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."

The '**Hope**' for **comfort** in this life is a path that is totally opposite from that of the world, to **mourn!** If you want to be happy despite the circumstances that rage, we have to develop an attitude of mourning. For those who '**mourn**', **will be comforted**. You and I need to make the '**Hope Choice**'; we need to decide to put our hope in His divine ability to "**comfort**" us, as He is the God of all comfort! In order to activate the kind of comfort that only God can give, we have to "**mourn**"! The word comfort in the Thayers definition no '**3870**' - **parakaleo- to console, to encourage and strengthen by consolation, to comfort, to receive consolation, to be comforted, to instruct, to teach.**

The hope that we place in God to encourage, strengthen etc produces a quality of life that many strive to attain and never get there, happiness. This happiness is released as a result of mourning. I don't really feel like going through life mourning. It's like going to the dentist; it's a real pain. Jesus is telling us that the thing that I am most often trying to avoid is actually God's path to real comfort. What does He mean we must mourn and what are we to mourn about? We are to mourn our sins is what is meant here.

We mourn over sin and despise it. We see sin the way God sees it and seek to treat it the way God does. Those who cover sin or defend sin certainly have the wrong attitude.

(Wiersbe, W. W. 1996, c1989. *The Bible exposition commentary. "An exposition of the New Testament comprising the entire 'BE' series"*--Jkt. Victor Books: Wheaton, Ill).

Many of us don't want to mourn the fact that our sins have hurt others, ourselves and God! That a bad habit has gotten a hold of my life and I can't seem to get rid of it, I can't control it. But the minute I mourn that sin, that hurt I caused, that hang-up, that bad habit, that's God's path to comfort and reality.

The truth of the matter is, what I want to avoid is God's path to real comfort. I have a path to comfort and hope... God has a path to comfort and hope. For too long, many of us have chosen the world's way and our own ways to comfort and hope. We've got a lot of different paths to comfort and hope. And all of them have to do with how I can get to a place of comfort, a place of hope as quickly as I possibly can. We don't want to go through any process. We don't want it to take any time. We just want to get there quick.

Because of that our paths to comfort and hope can be things like **alcohol**. We don't feel comfortable about life. We didn't like the way that our day went so what do we do? We drink and get drunk. Maybe it'll make me feel better. That becomes my path to comfort. That's what comforts me.

Or it might be our drug of choice; whatever drug you take that makes you feel more comfortable about life. For some people their path to comfort and hope is gambling.

Any time life feels uncomfortable, any time you feel without hope, you either go to the casino or you go online and all of a sudden you're getting the adrenalin up and you think you might win something and you feel better about life.

For some people it's sex. Pornography, illicit relationships, getting involved in a relationship, getting involved in sexual immorality that I feel like makes life more exciting. Somehow that helps me escape to a place where I think is comfort and hope.

For others it's food, they don't just eat to eat, they eat to escape to this place of comfort and hope. Other people, it's work they've got to achieve something to feel better about themselves. For some it's anger, believe it or not, some people, the way they feel more comfortable about *their* life is by making you feel less comfortable about *your* life. If they can make you feel bad somehow they feel more in control. That's their path to supposed false comfort and hope.

The problem is this. All the things that I think would give me comfort, all this escape, it only gives me a momentary escape at best. It gives me no comfort in the end. And these things often leave me addicted because I've got to try to get more and more of that thing to try to give me comfort when it's never going to give me comfort in the first place.

The truth of the matter is this. Many of us have discovered this the hard way. A comfortable life will not comfort your soul. You and I need something bigger, something greater than that. Something that only God can give.

How does God give us comfort and hope? What is his path? "Blessed are those that mourn, for they will be comforted." ***However, we need to understand a few dynamics if we are to receive His comfort and not believe the lies and deception of the enemy.***

God's path to comfort and hope begins with this:

1. See who God really is.

That's where it starts. You see who God really is. How do I know that I can trust God to comfort me? I only know that if I see him for whom he really is. How do I know that I can trust God to comfort me if all I think is that God is out to condemn me because of my failures? Some of us believe that lie; we believe that God is out there to 'get us'. To strike us down dead, or punish us only! He's always looking for you to mess up so he can tell you how messed up you really are. Maybe some Christian leader painted this picture this for you. Maybe something happened in your family and you picture God as a condemning God. You feel that to the depths of your soul.

If you feel that way let me ask you a question: What are you going to trust? Are you going to trust your feelings? Or are you going to trust the event that changed human history? Because that event, what happened when Jesus Christ walked onto this planet, what happened at Easter, the Resurrection, is all about God telling you he is not out to condemn you.

Romans 8:34 "Who then will condemn us? Will Christ? No! For he is the one who died for us and came back to life again for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us there in heaven." (TLB)

Maybe at some point all of us have felt the bitter sting of this deceptive feeling; that God is condemning us. I understand how powerful that feeling is in some of your lives.

Let me just share this with you quickly. Jesus came to this planet, Jesus lived his life for you, then he went to a cross and he died on that cross for you.

There is someone who died for you, who loves you that much. When I recognize that - he died for me, he loves me that much, so I can begin a relationship with him, so he can restore that relationship. When I see that, there's got to come a point in life where I begin to think maybe my feelings aren't right here. **Maybe my feelings don't match reality.**

What's God really like? Who is God? We could spend weeks talking about that. Who is God really? God is really a God of compassion.

Psalm 86:15 says "But you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness."

(NIV) That's what God is really like. **He's compassionate.**

Many of the things that we think about God aren't the truth about God. God is not out to condemn you. He is a compassionate God. He cares about your hurts. He cares about your habits. He doesn't look at you and say, "Why haven't you got over that yet?" He looks at you and says, "I can help you to work through this. I'm compassionate and I understand what you're going through." He's a compassionate God.

Who is God, really? **2 Corinthians 1:3** says this, **"God is the Father who is full of mercy and all comfort."** (NCV) That's who God is. **He is the Father who is full of mercy and all comfort.**

Some of you may have grown up with a father who was full of judgment. Don't put that on God. That's not who God is. God isn't that father. God is the Father who is full of mercy. God is the Father who is full of all comfort. That is his relationship with you.

What's God really like? God is all about being a part of your everyday life. God is about being close to you. God is about having a relationship with you no matter what you are going through. **Psalm 23:4 "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."** (NIV)

If I'm going to have hope I've got to see whom God really is. I've got to see that he doesn't come into my life to direct me to make me feel judged, but to let me know he really cares. Many people think that the rod and the staff is there so He can condemn me, that He's out to get me. But His rod and staff are there to comfort me. How does this work? This is the picture of a shepherd and sheep, a rod and a staff. **A rod was to discipline the sheep and a staff was to direct the sheep.** If the sheep were headed off of a cliff, the shepherd would make sure it didn't. And that was comforting. It is comforting not to fall off a cliff. Most of you would say that's a good thing. When I'm heading off a cliff in my life God will bring discipline into my life; he'll bring direction into my life, to keep me from falling off that cliff. **But it's not condemning. It's comforting.** Because I realize somebody loves me enough to tell me when I'm headed the wrong direction.

If you want to get to a place of hope first you have to see who God really is. But that's not all. You also have to be honest about a second thing.

2. **I have to see who I really am.**

3. We began to talk about this last week. One of the things I have to see about who I really am, I am broken. That's who I really am. I am broken.

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard." (NLT)

I think we all know that. I've never met a person who would say I've never sinned. I've never met a person who would say I've never done things in my life that I wish I hadn't done. Or I never wish I could do things that I never get to do. I've never met a person like that. We all know there's something in us that is broken.

As much as we know this is true, there is something in every one of us that wants to hide from that truth; just wants to pretend that it's not there and cover it over instead of just being honest about it. I don't know about you but I spend way too much of life and time and energy hiding from just this simple truth - I am broken.

The truth of the matter is, in the end I'm not going to be able to hide from it anyway. **Luke 12:2 "But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be made known." (NAS)** That verse scares the snot out of me. You read that and think "What? I thought if I could just get through the rest of this life, keep my hurt, habit, or hang-up secret and not tell anybody and then I get to go to heaven, that it would all get erased. If I could just make it until I die, then I'm going to be ok and nobody will ever know."

Then this verse comes. Here it is in the Message paraphrase. **Luke 12:2 "You can't keep your true self hidden forever; before long you'll be exposed. You can't hide behind a religious mask forever; sooner or later the mask will slip and your true face will be known."**

So, why be a hypocrite, because in the end it's all going to be known anyway. And in the end when it's all known and we are all together and I get to see who you really are and you get to see who I really am and we go, **"Wow! You did that? I'm so disappointed in you that you did that. It's shocking that you did that."** We're not going to be pointing at each other. In the end we're all going to realize we're all the same. We've all got the same struggles. We're all broken. We're all together. We're all one in this. We're all in the same boat. We're not going to be pointing fingers at each other. We're going to be pointing at the one who loves us - Jesus Christ. And saying thanks, **thank you that you've forgiven us all.**

Romans 3:24 says, "God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us [there's that freedom word again] by taking away our sins." (NLT)

Psalm 119:76 "May your unfailing love be my comfort."

Jeremiah 31:3 "I love you with an everlasting love. So I will continue to show you my kindness." (GW)

Be comforted in the fact that God's love is never going to fail you. Human love fades but God's love is everlasting. Human love fails but God's love never fails. Human love is often earned. But God's love is a gift. **I choose to hope in His everlasting love and know that He will comfort me with His forgiveness, kindness and mercy.**

4. I've got to see how God can change me.

Many of us see this as a major burden and a radical negative, we've tried to change ourselves and been disappointed and disappointed others. Some are just too tired of carrying the burden of trying to change themselves.

For a lot of us there's two negative reactions about us having to change. Let's deal with that because we've all had these. One of the negative reactions is, yeah, I'd like to change but I just don't have the time or energy right now. I'd like to change my life but I'm busy changing too many nappies to be able to change my life right now. I just can't throw one more thing into my life. I'm just too tired right now to change my life. If you've ever felt that way, join the human race.

Another reaction, often people have when I say, "God can change your life," is "Who am I kidding, that God can change my life? I've tried this a hundred times, a thousand times. I've prayed a prayer for change. I've tried to climb up that mountain again and again and I keep finding myself back at the same place. I've disappointed myself; I've disappointed others so many times. I feel like I've disappointed God. I'm not going to try to climb up that hill one more time. Why should I even try? Who am I kidding?"

Both of those negative reactions to change come from one place. They come from the place that's feeling like it's all on my shoulders. That somehow I've got to change my life for God. The idea that I've got to change my life, just tires me out, I tried so many times. ***So where do I find the power to change? God talks about it, He's got some refreshing hope for you and I.***

In Isaiah 40, there are some great verses in this regard. It's a chapter all about how God comforts us. The prophet starts the chapter with this statement: **Isa 40:1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. (RSV)**

At the end here's what God says about the kind of power that he wants to give into your daily life.

Isaiah 40:28-31 "Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know? That the Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak. Even youth will become exhausted, and young men will give up. But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will fly high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and they will not faint." (NLT)

It's not all on your shoulders. You want to have hope; you realize that God's power to change is God's power to change. It's not me changing for God. It's God changing me through his power. It's hoping in him.

But when it comes to hope, when it comes to connecting with God, when it comes to what is most important in life, you're not going to get it like the hummingbird. It's not a matter of how much energy you put into it. If you're worn out by trying to get to a place of hope on your own, I've got some good news for you. It's not the hummingbird. It's the eagle. You watch an eagle fly. They can soar to a height of ten thousand feet. A little hummingbird can barely get above your house. It doesn't get anywhere. But this eagle is soaring to ten thousand feet. Its wings aren't going fast like the hummingbird. It just stretches out its wings and it soars. Flaps every once in a while.

How does the eagle do that? The eagle is able to do that because God designed the eagle's wings to catch the updraft of the wind. So it soars to these points, this incredible height as it flies. Here's the truth about you. God has designed your soul to catch the updraft of his love. God, I need you. I'm not going to get there on my own. I trust you. I trust you moment by moment. I trust you day by day. My hope is in you! The moment I realize I need you, I feel the updraft of his love, of his strength, of his power. I choose to hope in your comfort for my broken life.