Practicing The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are the foundational tools that we have to not only possess, we have to learn how to use them in real life. First we have to understand what they are and what they do. Then we have to allow God to put them in our lives so they are ready for use, when we face a life situation that requires them.

We are going to take the most prominent people God handpicked to be in His Bible and use them as examples. Some of these people succeeded in using these principles and won at life. Others failed to use them and were damaged in various aspects of their lives. By our being able to see how these Beatitude tools work in these Biblical examples, we will see how to use them in our own lives.

Cain And Abel

The second example comes to us as two brothers; we are only related to them in that they were Adam and Eve's children. However, we were all born through the linage of Seth; who will later be born as their third child. Abel is killed; and Cain's children died in the flood. Only those who were born through Noah, who came through Seth, live on the earth now.

Cain and Abel started out just like us as innocent babies (not knowing the difference between right and wrong), then, one day, their conscience came alive and they both knew the difference between good and evil. Since they started out being innocent (not knowing the difference between right and wrong); they weren't responsible for any spiritual mistakes they made. But then God spoke to them through their conscience; and when they sinned against it, they became sinners.

Once Cain and Abel received this law from their conscience, they faced the same temptations we face as the Holy Spirit speaks to our conscience and tells us what is right and wrong. Satan came to them just like he comes to us; he didn't come to them in the form of a serpent; he came to them in their minds and in their feelings. So, let's get started comparing their life with ours as we see how to use the Beatitudes to win at life.

Humans Through Natural Birth:
Gen 4:1 (NIV) Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, "With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man."

This is the first human to come on the planet by means of a natural birth. But, since he came through Adam and Eve, and since they got a sinful nature through the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Cain got a desire in his body to sin. That is what has happened to us; we were born with a sinful nature that drives our body.

Sins Require A Blood Sacrifice:
Gen 4:2 (NIV) Later she gave birth to his brother Abel. Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.

Abel was born with a sinful nature just like Cain. Both of them had to deal with a desire in their body to do wrong things. They both had already started sinning against their conscience. God put a desire in their heart to offer Him an animal sacrifice for the sins they had been committing.

Refusing To Offer A Blood Sacrifice:
Gen 4:3 (NIV) In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD.

Rather than Cain using some of his vegetables to trade Abel for an animal to sacrifice, he decided to just take a shortcut and offer some vegetables to God for his sins. Most of the sins we commit involve taking shortcuts. Stealing is getting the money or things we need, but, without working for them. Lying is telling people what we want them to hear or think without us actually doing or producing that which we are claiming to have produced. It is making something up or distorting the truth so we can gain something we don't deserve.

Responding To The Requirement Of Our Conscience:
Gen 4:4 (NIV) But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering,

It was easier for Abel to make his sacrifice because he already had animals to offer. But, his sacrifice came through giving up one of his flock. It also came through seeing an innocent animal die in his place. We may not understand the full implications of there needing to be blood sacrifice; but, this is a rule or law of God concerning the cleansing of sin.

Heb 9:22 (NIV) In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and <u>without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness</u>.

We may not understand why we need to eat certain foods in order to be healthy; but, that is what our body needs. Just like we have to abide by the rules and requirements of gravity, chemistry, and mechanics, we have to abide by spiritual laws as well, whether we understand them or not.

The Beginnings Of A Temptation:
Gen 4:5 (NIV) but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. <u>So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast</u>.

This example with Cain shows us how we grow in an area of temptation. We don't always understand why God is for something or against it. We can either believe He is doing it for our own good or believe He has a bad reason. Cain could have gone to God and asked Him why He preferred Abel's offering over his. This would have helped Cain grow spiritually by asking questions and getting answers and training from God.

Let's say we are Cain; what could be some of our reasons for getting mad?

- We could think God preferred Abel over us.
- We could think God just doesn't like us for some reason.
- We could think that God doesn't appreciate what we do for Him.
- We could think that God doesn't understand our situation.
- We could think that God isn't fair.

The best and only beneficial way is for us to go to God and ask Him why He is working with us the way He is. If we face circumstances or fail to get certain wants and needs met, it is vital to our relationship with God that we not assume any bad or negative things about God; if we do, we will ALWAYS be wrong.

If we are a person who doesn't know that much about God, we may start out with a negative assumption. But, if we go to God with that assumption, He will help us get set free from it. He will show us His love for us; He will show us His grace and mercy for us; He will show us that He loves us with the same intense love He has for everyone.

We Must Allow God To Question Our Attitudes:
Gen 4:6 (NIV) Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast?

This is one of those spiritual questions that is designed to help us start to diagnose ourselves.

- The Holy Spirit may cause us to FEEL bad about the way we are thinking about God's motives. He may speak to our conscience and help us feel wrong about an assumption we are holding against God.

- There may come a THOUGHT that challenges the way we are thinking. It may be a quick flash of a thought that simply points out we are assuming something about God that isn't right.

- God may use some person to point out this bad assumption we are making.

- God may use some Scripture to show us where we are starting to be tempted and need to be set free from it.

However the help comes, we need to realize how important the warning is.

There Are Different Types Of Sins:
We are looking at the birth of a decision to do something that will damage our lives in a drastic way. There are some sins we commit that make small, gradual changes that hurt us because of the amount of them. But, there are some sins that are more hurtful and damaging than any others.

It is true that ANY sin that is not covered by the blood of Jesus makes us a sinner. However, even though sin is sin, we have to be aware that some sins do more damage to the people around us than other sins. Jesus makes this clear as He defines some sins that may seem to be fairly harmless.

> **Mat 5:21 (NIV) "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'**
>
> **Mat 5:22 (NIV) But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca [you empty headed, worthless person],' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.**

If we feel feelings of anger, we may not think much about it; we may not see it as being all that dangerous. We may not feel a warning signal that tells us we need to pray about it. But, we can ask God to help us consider any feeling of anger as a warning signal letting us know we need to pray a quick prayer in our mind about it.

God Always Gives Us A Way Out:
Gen 4:7 (NIV) If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? <u>But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door</u>; it desires to have you, but <u>you must master it</u>."

Let's take a quick look at the control God exercises over all the temptations that come our way:

1 Cor 10:13 (NIV) No temptation has seized you except what is <u>common to man</u>.
When we feel like our temptations are unique, that is when we feel no one understands what we are going through. When we feel no one understands, that is when we try to handle them alone. When we feel our temptations are worse or more embarrassing than most people's, that is when we try to handle them alone.

When we get any ideas or feelings that cause us to bury or hide the temptations we are experiencing, that is the moment we need to take them to God; He will always understand and be ready to help.

And God is faithful;
We need to always be praying about our opinions of God. If we have any negative opinions of Him, those negative opinions will hurt our abilities to come to Him for help. Satan will send thoughts and feelings our way that try to cause us to think or feel things about God that aren't true. But, if we accept those thoughts or feelings, they will hinder us from realizing that HE IS FAITHFUL.

He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.
None of us get temptations that come our way that are too much for us. The temptations that come our way are filtered by God; He has seen to it that we have all the spiritual equipment we need to be able to defeat them. No one is being forced into sin; there are never temptations coming our way that God doesn't have us prepared for.

If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? <u>But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door</u>; it desires to have you, but <u>you must master it</u>." Some kind of warning like this will come into our mind, heart, or through some person. God will provide us with a Scripture, a feeling, a warning thought; He will give us an exit strategy that will keep us from finding ourselves in the MIDDLE of the temptation.

In the BEGINNING of a temptation, we will typically find ourselves being drawn to an idea, an attitude, or a desire for something; but, we haven't thought it through, reasoned with it, considered its "benefits," or made any plans as to how we would go about yielding to it. This is the next best place for us to deal with the temptation.

The best place is always in the things we do to get ready BEFORE a temptation. Then when a temptation does come, we have the tools and weapons ready to use to deal with the BEGINNING stage of a temptation. That is what the Beatitudes are all about; they are our tools and preparations BEFORE the temptation comes.

But WHEN you are tempted,
We may decide to not pray, study, grow in our faith, grow in our love, or grow in our faith-action, but, the temptations will still come anyway. It is our responsibility to spend the time with God so as to be ready for them. "When" is different than "if;" "when" is saying that it is just a matter of time. Temptations will come our way; we just have to do what it takes to learn how to deal with them.

He will also provide a WAY OUT so that you can stand up under it.
The major **way out** that God provides is the studying we do, the praying we do, the faith we grow in, the love we grow in, and the faith-actions we take BEFORE we are tempted. Too many Christians wait until they get in the MIDDLE of the temptation and then wonder where the **way out** is.

There are things we can do when we are in the MIDDLE of a temptation; but, none of them are preventative. It is in the middle of a temptation that we and God have to start dealing with the consequences of sin. Forgiveness, grace, mercy, and love can come to us, if we repent (make a U-turn). But, we will still reap the results of the things we have done.

What To Do When The Temptation Comes:
Gen 4:5 (NIV) but on Cain and his offering He did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

Cain was on his way to defeat before he even entered into the battle with temptation. Why? Because he hadn't gotten himself ready for such an issue. God tried to help him get ready by explaining what he needed to do to get ready. However, we aren't here to critique Cain, we need to do this study as if WE are Cain.

The Beatitudes are the characteristics we must ALREADY have WHEN we face this kind of temptation. In order to keep this from being a study about what Cain SHOULD have done, we will need to see how we need to get ourselves ready by studying and learning how to USE the Beatitudes to help us win at life.

Using The Beatitudes To Get Ready Before Temptation Comes

- **Poor In Spirit** is to have a teachable attitude. This means that we need to BE WILLING to learn all those things we are going to need during a battle. We must be ready for temptation BEFORE we get into it. If we come into this battle in Cain's condition, we are approaching it with self-confidence. We are using self-confidence to argue with our thoughts, feelings, friends, or whatever source is presenting the temptation.

  If we are being tempted with anger, for example, our emotions would come to us with negative feelings. Our mind would try to come up with a reason for why we were angry. It would reason out all the circumstances that point to the fact that we have been mistreated. We would have feelings of being abused, cheated, and used.

  Rather than using the poor in spirit attitude and coming to God with the issue, we would try to diagnose and solve our own emotional problem. The Cain problem in us would cause us to neglect to use the provisions that God has given us to fight this battle. We would be using our own thought processes to try to decide what to do about this temptation.

  Let's make God's statement into our statement of faith:
  We say to our emotions, why am I so angry? Why is my face downcast? If I do what is right, will I not be accepted? But if I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door; it desires to have me, but as God gives me the strength, I must master it.

  This could be a statement of faith in God and His Words, if it comes from a poor in spirit and meekness attitude. We would be saying that this is what God said; this is what I believe; and, as God gives me the strength, this is what I am going to continue to believe and take faith-action on.

  But, in the Cain situation, there was no statement of faith; rather, what God said was just ignored. His words were being treated as words that were open for consideration. They weren't "final authority" words from the God of the universe. They weren't with respect for Who God is; they weren't taken into consideration that He loves us, wants the best for us, and spoke them for our benefit and safety.

- **Mourning** is allowing God to show us what our real problem is within ourselves. If we are being tempted with a relationship issue like friendship, business clients, divorce, marriage, or child raising, for example, we may assume that the other person is the problem. Rather than allowing God to go through OUR heart and show US where WE are part of the problem, we can resist mourning and try to justify or forgive our part of the problem.

Now, let's make God's statement into our statement of faith:
We say to our heart, why am I so abusive in my relationships? Why is my face so prideful? If I do what is right, will I not be accepted? But if I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door; it desires to have me, but as God gives me the strength, I must master these relationship problems.

This could be a statement of faith in God and His words, if we allow God to show us that we have attitude and character issues that are hindering us. If we get to the place where we can see we aren't our answer and that we are part of the problem, our faith can be much stronger in God and His words.

But, in the Cain attitude, there is no statement of faith; rather, what God says is just ignored. The Cain attitude doesn't allow God to help us go over our attitudes and help us feel bad about them. It doesn't allow our heart to open and let God show us what evil thoughts we are thinking. It keeps us from yielding to mourning and start feeling bad about what we are planning. It causes us to resist God's words, thoughts, and feelings and embrace our thoughts and feelings.

- **Meekness** is accepting professionals and experts as being people we need to put some part of our life in their hands. If we are being tempted with a fear, for example, we may decide to try to handle it with our own skills, talents, power, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Or, we may choose some person who isn't a Christian to be our expert or give us professional help.

  Meekness is the process of us accepting God as our only expert in the area where we need help. If we are poor in spirit (teachable) with someone other than God and the people He picks for us, then we have become meek with the wrong person or group.

  Now, let's make God's statement into our statement of faith as it relates to meekness: We say to our heart, why am I so fearful? Why is my face downcast? If I do what is right, will I not be accepted? But if I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door; it desires to have me, but as God gives me the strength, I must master fear.

  This could be a statement of faith in God and His words, if we have opened our heart to accepting Him as our expert or professional for doing things for us that we are not capable of doing for ourselves. We can see God as being the expert of all experts, the authority on all subjects, the professional of all professionals, the leader of all leaders, and the God over all creation.

  But, in the Cain attitude, there is no statement of faith; rather, what God says to us is just ignored. The Cain attitude doesn't accept God as our expert or professional in the matter. It causes us to consider our self to be the expert and professional for this issue. Rather than putting God in the decision making position, it causes us to keep our self there.

- **Righteousness** is the attitude and act of doing those things that are good for us, those around us, and God's plan. It is also the avoidance of all those things that are bad for us, others, and God's plan. However, what is good and what is bad is established only through what God says they are.

  If we are being tempted to be judgmental, for example, to hunger and thirst after righteousness is to go to our heavenly Father and ask Him to show us what is the good way to treat people and what is the bad way. We should ask Him to show us who is being benefited by the system of judgment, we are using, and who is being hurt.

  Now, let's make God's statement into our statement of faith as it relates to righteousness: We say to our heart and mind, why am I so being so judgmental? Why is my face self-righteous? If I do what is right, will I not be loving? But if I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door; it desires to have me, but as God gives me the strength, I must master judgmentalism through righteousness.

  This could be a statement of faith in God and His words, if we see the true character and attitudes of God's righteousness. Without us being able to see this clearly, we have a little doubt or question in our mind as to whether or not God's word on the matter is true, best, right, or good IN OUR CASE. Without this hunger and thirst, we may think things like, He may be right on this subject for other people; but, this doesn't apply to my situation.

  But, in the Cain attitude, there is no statement of faith; rather, what God says is just ignored. The Cain attitude doesn't allow us to open our heart to the righteousness of God. It doesn't give us the ability to decide to ask God to help us yield to those things that are good for us, those around us, and God's plan.

  Being Willing To Be Willing:
  There was a part of Cain that didn't want God's help, it wanted to murder Abel. But, there was another part of Cain that could have said, God, I can't seem to come up with a desire to be helped with this attitude. My feelings and desires are so strong I can't seem to want your help with this. But, I am willing for You to make me willing to seek your help.

  This is the type of prayer we can pray, when we are seemingly filled with a complete desire to do wrong. It is a moment when it looks like our mind is made up. It appears all is lost and we are going to sin no matter what. Even though we aren't willing, at the moment, to accept God's help, we can pray and ask God to help us be willing to reach out for His help. Just say: "God I am willing to be helped with being willing to reach out for Your help."

- **Mercy** is to give someone something good that they don't deserve or to refuse to punish them for doing something they deserve punishment, retaliation, or brought to justice for. In this case, there is only Eve, Adam, Cain, Abel, Satan, and God involved in this temptation issue.

  Cain could have talked to Adam and Eve, his parents and explained what he was thinking and feeling. He could have even talked to Abel about it and tried to see if those around him could help. They might have prayed with him and helped him get the healing he needed.

  Instead of Cain turning to God, he listened to Satan and never got the mercy attitude he needed. He never got mercy in order to be healed from the anger and murder in his heart and mind.

  That can happen to us, if we don't put ourselves in Cain's place for a short while. It is vital for us to see that we are no different from Cain. It may take a lot of events; but, we can all be pushed into very evil things, if we don't study, pray, believe, love, and take faith-action.

  Now, let's make God's statement into our statement of faith as it relates to mercy: We say to our heart and mind, why am I being so filled with hate? Why is my face so vicious? If I do what is right, will I not forgive? But if I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door; it desires to have me, but as God gives me the strength, I must master it.

- **A Pure Heart** is to have motives that are filled with love and righteousness. It is to have God's love that is listed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a and the righteousness listed in Galatians 5:22-23. This is a place where we have to ask God to search our heart. Since our heart is buried in a deep place where it can't be analyzed by us, and since it can't be reasoned with by our mind, we need the Holy Spirit to guide us with the prayers we need (Romans 8:26-27).

  Jer 17:9 (NIV) The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? We are up against a part of us that is impossible for us to diagnose. We will NEVER be able to examine our own motives for why we are doing something. We will never know FOR SURE that we are doing it with pure motives. Trying to justify ourselves won't do it; and trying to convince ourselves and others that we are doing things with a pure heart won't do it.

  If we don't take our heart to God, the One Who nothing is impossible for Him, we WILL be fooled by our heart. We MUST allow God to search our heart and help us see what our REAL motive is for why we want something, why we are thinking, feeling, saying, or doing something, or why we are living a certain way.

No matter what it is we are being tempted with, our heart will have a hidden agenda for why it is trying to justify doing the wrong thing. It can make us want to yield to the temptation with a very strong emotional desire. It will be irresistible without God's power to help us with it.

Now, let's make God's statement into our statement of faith as it relates to a pure heart: We say to our heart and mind, why am I thinking, feeling, saying, and doing these things? Why is my face so determined? If I do what is right, will I not be healed? But if I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door; it desires to have me, but as God gives me the strength, I must master these things.

This could be a statement of faith in God and His words, if we have a heart that is being shown to us by God. In Romans 8:26-27 we have a way of being presented heart motives that are typically hidden from us. If we are praying and yielding to the Holy Spirit's presentations of things that need to be healed in our heart, we will be able to put our whole trust in God and His words.

Feelings Of Persecution:
But, in the Cain attitude, there is no statement of faith; rather, what God said was just ignored. The Cain attitude doesn't allow us to pray and ask God for a pure heart; as far as we would be able to tell, we wouldn't even WANT a pure heart. It causes us to WANT to feel sorry for ourselves; it makes us ENJOY thinking about how mistreated and abused we are.

The more Cain mulled over his feelings of self-pity, the more pleasure he got from it all. But, the more pleasure he got from it, the more desire he got to do something about his situation. His distorted view on life filled his mind and heart until he BECAME CONVINCED that he was totally justified in killing his brother.

We can produce the total opposite of a pure heart; rather than making God the source of our heart and mind's material, we can fill it with thoughts and feelings from Satan. He can so distort our thoughts and feelings that we lose contact with the way things really are.

- **A Peacemaker** is a person who has God's peace already in their own heart and life. They are those who are willing to share this peace with those who are struggling with having peace in their own life and in their relationship with other people.

  Cain didn't have peace in his own heart; it is true that this offering to God issue really set him off. But, he didn't get to this place where one thing took him all the way to murder. Cain had been resisting peace in his heart and life for a long time.

Born With A Strong Will:
We can start out as a baby with a strong will; we can have strong emotional reactions as a normal way for us to deal with the issues of life. We can be born with a volatile personality that responds differently from most people. However, that doesn't mean that is the way we are supposed to be.

Cain probably excused himself with statements like, that is just the way I am. He may have justified his actions by deciding that someone else "made him mad;" he may have decided that they deserved his reactions.

Cain more than likely blamed people and circumstances for most, if not all, of his problems and behavior. If someone proved to him he was wrong, he probably quickly forgave himself. He may have forgiven himself through deciding he was born that way and couldn't change. Because he didn't have peace in his own life, he wasn't able to be a peacemaker.

Let's make God's statement into our statement of faith for being a peacemaker:
We say to our heart and mind, why don't I have peace in my life? Why is my face so stressed? If I do what is right, will I not be filled with peace? But if I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door; it desires to have me, but as God gives me the strength, I must master this issue with peace.

- **Persecution** is any outside human resistance against what we believe and know God has told us to believe and know. In this situation with Cain, his attitude was more of an imagined persecution. Rather than being attacked for what he believed and knew, he THOUGHT Abel was his persecutor. He probably even saw God as persecuting him.

  God had told him what he needed to believe and know. It could have saved and protected him from any kind of temptation. But, if he saw God as one of his persecutors, that would keep him from listening.

  No One Can Make Us Give Up On Jesus:
  Satan couldn't force him to change his beliefs or training through his conscience. All he was able to do was try to convince him to do the changing himself. We don't go the direction we go by being forced; people, ideas, feelings, and circumstances have to convince us to make the change; the FINAL decision is ours.

  Persecution is more of an effort to force us to change our beliefs and truths. It can come as a verbal attack of making fun of us, criticizing us, accusing us falsely, gossiping against us, and saying all kinds of evil things about us. It can come as a rejection socially, cutting us off relationally, or punishing us through governmental systems.

Seeing Things Backwards:
Persecution can come as a physical attack of hitting us, abusing us physically, torturing us, or even killing us. It is all aimed at trying to FORCE us to give up on Jesus and His words. However, the Cain spiritual condition is a condition where a person is trained, thinks, and believes wrong things.

Psychopaths:
The Cain spiritual condition is very unique in that it is the reverse of what most people go through. People with the Cain condition actually believe their way of life is the right way. They think those who are resisting them are trying to persecute them out of doing what is right for them. These people's beliefs are based on being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, narcissists. They can be psychopaths who lack the ability to identify with anyone but themselves.

Secular Humanists:
A milder case of this is a secular humanist who believes in self-esteem, self-confidence, self-assertion, self-aggrandizement, self-pride, and selfishness. They aren't prone to murdering anyone; but, they will use people, abuse them, defeat them, neglect them, cheat them, and hurt them without any feelings of remorse. Jacob was one of those people who started out with this spiritual condition. See the Esau and Jacob study.

Let's make God's statement into our statement of faith for being a winner over persecution: We say to our heart and mind, why don't I have a trust in God for my life? Why is my face so filled with panic? If I do what is right, will I not be filled with a complete trust in God? But if I do not do what is right, sin is crouching at my door; it desires to have me, but as God gives me the strength, I must master this issue with persecution.

This could be a statement of faith in God and His words even in the face of persecution, if we are able to see how important and valuable Jesus and all He has given us is. We can become blessed and filled with appreciation and clarity. As we realize all we shall inherit now and in eternity, we will even be willing to give up our temporal life rather than deny Jesus as our Savior.

Fulfilling An Evil Plan:
Gen 4:8 (NIV) Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

Steps To Yielding To A Temptation:

- The first step into yielding to a temptation is to start thinking about the "benefits" we will get from yielding to a temptation.

- The second step is to think about what method we would use to get the pleasure the temptation is offering.

- The third step is to make plans for how we are going to carry them out WITHOUT GETTING CAUGHT. We start to think about WAYS of doing them; we develop systems for making them happen.

Let's use Cain as an example; how did he get to the place where he was ready to murder his brother? He had to do a lot of thinking, planning, dreaming about the "benefits" he would get out of it all. **Let's go out to the field** is based on a plan that had been worked on. Cain felt like he had come up with a way to make himself happy.

It is amazing how sick our thinking can get, if we allow evil thoughts to enter into us. Cain didn't start out BEING a murderer; he had to allow Satan to turn him INTO a murderer. To go from a normal human being into becoming a murderer takes a lot of yielding to a lot of conversations with Satan.

Broadening The Steps To Yielding To Temptation:
When we start going through the three steps into temptation, we start with some fairly neutral thoughts. We don't start thinking about doing something as drastic as what we end up doing. Satan sends us thoughts that make us feel sorry for ourselves.

Step One: Satan simply makes us feel like we deserve better than we are getting.
Step Two: Satan starts showing us what we "might" do to better ourselves by doing something that God calls sin.
Step Three: We work up a plan for how we would go about making things better for ourselves.
Step Four: We set up a day or a time when we will put the plan in action.
Step Five: We fulfill the requirements of the temptation.

As we look over these steps, if we put God rather than Satan, righteousness rather than sin, and some good issue rather than a bad one into the these steps, we could use them to accomplish something good. But, if we put a temptation to sin into these steps, we hurt ourselves and other people; and we hurt God's plan for blessing us humans.

We Can Still Repent:
Gen 4:9 (NIV) Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

This is a spiritual question; it is a moment where we can look back on what we have just done and repent. Sometimes we will be so CAUGHT UP in the temptation that we don't even realize how far we have gone. Then, as we look back at who we have become it shocks us into spiritual reality. We are then ready to repent and allow God to forgive and heal us. We will have to reap the results of our sin; but, we won't have to pay the consequences of our sin.

Let's make God's statement into our PRAYER of faith for being a repentant person:
We say to God, why don't I have the Beatitude attitudes in my life? Why is my face so filled my own wants and desires? Help me do what is right and repent, will I not be filled with forgiveness?

Help me realize that because I did not do what is right according to Your Word, sin was crouching at my door; it desired to have me and got me because I didn't put my trust in You. But, as God gives me the strength, I must master this issue with repentance and ask for Your forgiveness.

We Can Still Take It To God:
Gen 4:10 (NIV) The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

We will NEVER commit a sin and God not know about and deal with. When we sin, the very best way is to immediately take it to God and ask Him to help us with it. If we get to the point where God has to come to us, the issue will be much greater.

This has to do with our attitudes and desires that get transformed through the Beatitudes; if we have put ourselves in Cain's place, we will learn how to keep it from happening to us. If we yield to the Beatitudes, we will even be able to get God's help AFTER we have responded to a temptation. The Beatitudes are powerful tools that heal our attitudes before, during, and after yielding to a temptation to sin.

The Consequences Of Sin Not Repented Of:
Gen 4:11-12 (NIV) Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth.

If Cain had repented, he would have experienced God's discipline as his heavenly Father. He would have also experienced reaping the results of what he had done. But, HE WOULD NOT have experienced the consequence of sin. God's disciple and reaping the results of a sin is NEVER as bad as getting the consequence of sin. Getting the consequences of our sins is the worst thing that can happen to us.

The Consequences Of Sin Are Overwhelming:
Gen 4:13 (NIV) Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear.

There are several things to consider here: Cain is still just looking at himself; he isn't feeling bad about what he did; he isn't repenting and ready to make a U-turn and head in a different direction; he isn't sorry that he killed his brother; and, he isn't ready to start learning about the righteousness of God.

When we forgive ourselves, blame our sins and shortcomings on others, justify and explain away what we have done, try to tell ourselves and others that what we did wasn't all that bad, and refuse to repent, we experience the CONSEQUENCES of sin. When we REFUSE to yield to the poor in spirit, mourning, meekness, and hungering and thirsting for righteousness attitudes, we will NOT be ABLE to repent; we will end up with the consequences of sin like Cain did.

ONLY Seeing Things From Our Own Perspective:
Gen 4:14 (NIV) Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."

Cain wants us to feel sorry for his experiencing the consequences of sin. He doesn't see that he brought this on himself; he sees it as God picking on him. When we fail to pray for EACH item in the Beatitudes, believe for them, respond to the love that makes them work, and take faith-action on the basis of them, we end up with this type of attitude. We see the world, our situations and circumstances being all about us. Cain couldn't feel sorry for Abel; he only felt sorry for himself.

The Beatitudes Are Our Only Hope:
Cain needs so many more things than what he was concerned about and is asking God's help with. Murdering his brother should have awaken him to the fact that he needed a lot of spiritual help; but, this is all he is praying about; and, that is all he gets help with.

- If he were to yield to being **poor in spirit**, he would become teachable enough to learn truths that would bless, heal, and transform his life into wonderful things that God provides.

- If he were to allow God to take him into **mourning**, he could be taken into being able to feel the sorrow for murdering his brother. That would have opened his heart to love, compassion, and concern for those around him.

- If he could have yielded to **meekness,** God would have taken him into His incredible knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. He would have learned principles that would have given him great success in life. God would have become his expert and authority on life philosophies, principles, and methods.

- If he could have started **hungering and thirsting after righteousness**, he would have learned how to treat himself and those around him with wonderful methods. That would have brought him incredible relationships that would have been his friends, family, business partners, and associates. And, he would have been able to become a part of the awesome plan and work of God.

- If he could have allowed all the **rest of the Beatitudes** to become a part of his attitudes and character, he would have become a transformed person that was able to feel the hearts and lives of the people around him. He could have expanded his life into the lives of those around him and felt the warmth, joy, and satisfaction of being a part of other people's lives.

But instead, Cain remained trapped in his own body, heart, and mind. He was only able to see the people and the world around him from his own little perspective. He went the rest of his life alone in his own little world.

We Only Get What We Ask For:
Gen 4:15 (NIV) But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him.

This is how a lack of being willing to repent works in all of our lives. God demonstrates how much He loves us by helping us with some of the areas of need so we can see how wonderful Christianity can be. But, some of us miss the whole point of what other things we could have, if only we would repent and go back in the direction of the grace and mercy of God.

Our Attitudes Are Our Door:
The Beatitudes are our passport into so much more than we would ever be able to think of or ask for. They open our eyes to seeing a whole miraculous and supernatural way of life that only God can give us.

1 Cor 2:9-10 (NIV) However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him"--<u>but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit</u>. The Spirit searches all things, <u>even the deep things of God</u>.

- Being **poor in spirit** helps us be teachable; it helps us open up to all the great things God has to offer. It helps our heart and mind be able to see what we are missing. It helps set us free from just seeing things from our own little world.

- **Mourning** helps us feel bad about the way we have lived in the past. It opens our eyes to how evil sin is and how much we have hurt ourselves and other people. It shows us how much we need God's help and training.

- **Meekness** lets us see how powerful, how much knowledge and understanding about everything, and how gracious, merciful, and loving God is. It helps us realize God has all the supernatural, miraculous things and His Kingdom available for us; it help us put our trust in Him.

- **Hungering and thirsting after righteousness** gives us a way to start living the Christian life with the attitudes and character of our heavenly Father. For the first time in our lives, we not only know how to treat ourselves and others, we get the power to live that life.

Separated From God:
Gen 4:16 (NIV) So Cain <u>went out from</u> the Lord's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

This is the existence of the sinner; this is the spiritual death that separates us from the presence of God. God didn't walk away from Cain; Cain walked away from God. But, that is what all of our rights and freedoms are about; we all have a God-given free will and God is determined to honor the decisions we all make.

God is waiting for us to allow Him to do those things we are willing to allow Him to do to and for us. He is listening to our heart and mind as we ask Him for what we want. As long as we don't ask Him to do something that would hurt us or other people, He will do them for us. They may be far below what He COULD do for us; but, He will do them so MAYBE we will get the mercy attitude so we can see how much more He can do.

If we yield to the Beatitudes, we will see, we will pray, we will believe, we will love, and we will take faith-action for so much more.