

## The Model

### Chapter 3

*"But if you are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. 28 Pray for the happiness of those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn the other cheek. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. 30 Give what you have to anyone who asks you for it; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. 31 Do for others as you would like them to do for you. 32 "Do you think you deserve credit merely for loving those who love you? Even the sinners do that! 33 And if you do good only to those who do good to you, is that so wonderful? Even sinners do that much! 34 And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, what good is that? Even sinners will lend to their own kind for a full return. 35 "Love your enemies! Do good to them! Lend to them! And don't be concerned that they might not repay. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to the unthankful and to those who are wicked. 36 You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.37 "Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. Stop criticizing others, or it will all come back on you. If you forgive others, you will be forgiven. 38 If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving--large or small--it will be used to measure what is given back to you." 39 Then Jesus gave the following illustration: "What good is it for one blind person to lead another? The first one will fall into a ditch and pull the other down also. 40 A student is not greater than the teacher. But the student who works hard will become like the teacher. 41 "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? 42 How can you think of saying, 'Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.43 "A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. 44 A tree is identified by the kind of fruit it produces. Figs never grow on thornbushes or grapes on bramble bushes. 45 A good person produces good deeds from a good heart, and an evil person produces evil deeds from an evil heart. Whatever is in your heart determines what you say.46 "So why do you call me 'Lord,' when you won't obey me? 47 I will show you what it's like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then obeys me. 48 It is like a person who builds a house on a strong foundation laid upon the underlying rock. When the floodwaters rise and break against the house, it stands firm because it is well built. 49 But anyone who listens and doesn't obey is like a person who builds a house without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it will crumble into a heap of ruins."(Luke 6:27-49)*

Should these Words be taken literally? Was Jesus idealistic? Absolutely, yes to both questions! This is what the kingdom looks like. These are the Words of Jesus that separates the men from the boys, the wheat from the chaff, the true from the false.

Preaching the gospel is one thing; living it is another. Jesus laid out the perimeters of the kingdom in the gospel of Luke. We see a more extended version in Matthew 5-7. Jesus was addressing the character of kingdom citizens. Be careful, you may be shocked when you read it. What we read above is God's idea for how we should live; it's a model for living, you could say. Webster's dictionary defines "model" as a preliminary representation of something, serving as the plan from which the final, usually larger, object is to be constructed. Jesus was giving us the model to convey how His kingdom should and eventually would look like in the earth. ***How we model the gospel is just as important as how we preach it.*** Jesus didn't preach what He didn't live. This is the model that He gave us to live by with the coming kingdom in mind. In essence He was saying to live as kingdom citizens today, you are not like the world. If the reality of the kingdom has come to life on the inside of us, then this is the pattern to live by. If you believe in the kingdom, then live the kingdom. Our faith always translates to action. When we live the gospel it opens the door of ministry to those around us. We respond to the world as God responded to us. Preaching the Gospel is easy when you live it. Don't worry about drawing attention to yourself; when you live a kingdom lifestyle it will draw attention to itself. Jesus realized the importance of a kingdom lifestyle. He went as far to say that the world would recognize us by it.

## Kingdom Traits

***One day as the crowds were gathering, Jesus went up the mountainside with his disciples and sat down to teach them. 2 This is what he taught them: 3 "God blesses those who realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given to them. 4 God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 God blesses those who are gentle and lowly, for the whole earth will belong to them. 6 God blesses those who are hungry and thirsty for justice, for they will receive it in full. 7 God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. 9 God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. 10 God blesses those who are persecuted because they live for God, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. (Matthew 5:1-10)***

As Jesus addresses the characteristics of the kingdom it's hard not to notice how different they are than what we see in the world around us. Here Jesus gives a list of blessings, otherwise known as the beatitudes. How many in the world or the church, for that matter, would consider these on top of their wish list? Let me use my life as an example to illustrate a relationship to the beatitudes. When I was a young man I had a deep need to fit in, no matter what the cost. Every time I thought I had found my place it seemed like the rug was ripped out from under me. At the time I thought it was a curse. I later realized it to be a blessing. It wasn't until I found the Lord that I realized my set of circumstances had really been God's mercy in bringing me to Him. I don't say this boastfully, but when I came to Jesus it was my last resort. I had realized my need for Him, but had considered it as a sign of weakness; judging by the world's point of view. I hadn't yet realized that my apparent weakness has positioned me as a prime candidate for the kingdom.

Let me say this, God loves what the world hates. He loves the rejected, the outcast, the weak, and the lame. These are His specialty. If you don't believe me look at His disciples. There is no shame in realizing your need for God, and falling under the category of "poor in spirit; it's the blessing of God bringing us by His grace to the place where self no longer satisfies, and coming to the place where we truly realize our need for Him. It's from this place that true power and life come. Who cares what man says. Man is a vapor next to God. It is God's standard and measurement that means something, not the worlds. The place of pain oftentimes brings us to an encounter with our creator. Man has strength, but not enough to attain and supply the deepest needs in the human life. Blessed is the man who realizes his need for God. This is a place of victory; not defeat. Although contradictory to the world, these are the characteristics that are accepted by God and intended for His church. The kingdom is what sets the church apart. We are intended to be a city set on a hill for the whole world to see, the characteristics and life of the kingdom are what makes us the joy of the whole earth we were purposed to be.

## Humility

*About that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Which of us is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" 2 Jesus called a small child over to him and put the child among them. 3 Then he said, "I assure you, unless you turn from your sins and become as little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven. 4 Therefore, anyone who becomes as humble as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. (Matt 18:1-5)*

Who is the greatest in the kingdom today? Is it those with titles and positions? It seems like there's a lot of fighting over positions and titles in the church today and little thought of position in the kingdom. Which is more important? Where one's treasure is, there his heart will be also. Why is this? The reason people are fighting about position and power is because their treasure is in the life they live on earth and not in the kingdom. We need the kingdom vision, not the worldly man-centered vision. The world fights for position and power. The church is in the world but we are not of it. ***Are we seeking glory in this life for ourselves or seeking a crown in the next?*** It's one thing to be saved from our sin and an entirely different thing to be converted to the kingdom. This is what Jesus is after in all of us. Until we are converted to the way of the kingdom and make it our primary concern we will be of little use in the work of God. There will be no heart for the lost and no seeking after the true will of God until these issues are dealt with. Humility is key in spreading the gospel. It gives us the proper perspective and allows us to see clearly.

Jesus said the greatest in the kingdom was as a little child. Humility has to do with God-power; not manpower; a dependency upon God for all that a person receives. A child is dependent upon its parent for everything he or she receives. Pride is manpower, humility is God-power. Humility is trusting in God to get the job done. Pride is leaning on my own strength to get the job done. We must realize that there is a place of significance for each of us in the kingdom. Jesus said the greatest would be the least. Finding fulfillment in positions and titles is shallow and short-lived. We live by faith and

not by sight. When we see our significance in the kingdom we will quit striving for man's approval and begin to live for God's approval. God has you covered and promises to give you all that's coming to you if you will just trust Him. We forfeit the blessing when we refuse to trust God and try to force the hand ourselves. Humility opens up our eyes to see all that God has intended for us. We begin to see what we couldn't before, due to our seeking in and for the wrong things. Greatness is in position and not in possession. Jesus made this clear in the lives of the Pharisees who did their deeds to be seen by man. They had the deed-part right, but their heart was wrong. The disciples were also prime examples. They were fighting it out to see who would be the greatest. It took time with the Master and the teaching of His Word to bring them to a proper perspective. We are all born with selfish motives. Don't feel bad if you fall into one of these categories, just realize it and humble yourself under God's hand. It takes time to renew our minds and bring us to the place of humility. God is patient and will help us as long as we are willing to be taught.

## Reciprocity

*21 Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?" 22 "No!" Jesus replied, "seventy times seven! 23 "For this reason, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. 24 In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. 25 He couldn't pay, so the king ordered that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt. 26 But the man fell down before the king and begged him, 'Oh, sir, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.' 27 Then the king was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. 28 "But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. 29 His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient and I will pay it,' he pleaded. 30 But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and jailed until the debt could be paid in full. 31 "When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him what had happened. 32 Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. 33 Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison until he had paid every penny. 35 "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters in your heart." (Matthew 18:21-35)*

The Apostle Paul, when speaking to the Galatians says in short, whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (**Galatians 6:7**) Jesus said, "Stop judging others, and you will not be judged for others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. (**Matt 7:1-3**) Many today believe that there are no absolutes, that there will be no consequences to the way we live our lives here on earth. Here's the deal: God wants to hand out rewards on the Day of Judgment, not citations. In a world where seemingly no absolutes exist, God's

Word remains unchanged. People may change, but God cannot. Why do we forgive others? Because God has forgiven us. Why do we show mercy? Because we need mercy. Jesus saved us from Hell but He didn't save us from judgment. Jesus will one day come as the righteous judge to give to each of us according to our deeds. (**Revelations 22:12**) This is why He told us not to judge, lest we be judged. Living in light of this truth will transform the way we live. We read in the psalms that the Law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul. (**Psalms 19:7**) Judgment belongs to God and He will fully vindicate. It is our job to tell the world the good news of Gods coming judgment, it is not our job to judge the world. Jesus said that He didn't come to condemn the world, but to save it. God's Word is able to get the job done. If we will stick with our message and live with reciprocity in mind, God will change the lives of those around us. We don't need to apologize for our message; those hearing the message need to apologize. We are responsible to love and forgive; God is responsible for the rest.

There are many in the Church today living any old way and quite frankly it scares the heck out of me. Many who take no mind to the way they live, their lives will be surprised on the day they stand before God. Jesus said that many will come to Him on judgment day proclaiming that they had prophesied and cast out demons in His name and yet He will respond in return that He never new them. (**Matthew 7:22**) Prophesying and casting out devils does not validate believers; doing the will of God, on the other hand, does. We may prophesy and we may cast out devils, but never at the expense of obedience to His Word. We need the gifts of the Spirit, but we equally need the fruit of the Spirit. God puts as much emphasis on the fruit as He does on the gift. If we get the fruit right, the gifts will follow. *It takes faith for the gifts, but costs us love for the fruit.* God is serious about the way we live and represent Him here on earth.

What is the will of God? There are many things that we each may do in varying degrees from one another. For instance, one may feel a deep conviction towards missions, or prayer, or serving, or giving, etc. This is not what I mean by asking the question concerning God's will. There are two things according to First John that pertains to every believer. No one is exempt. Those two things are: to believe in the one God sent (Jesus), and to love one another as He gave commandment. (**I John 3:22-23**) This is the will of God. Jesus said that His burden was easy and His yoke was light. John says the commandment of the Lord is not burdensome. What we have been learning in relation to the model has to do with love; turning the other cheek, going the extra mile, blessing our enemies and so on. Jesus summed it all up by commanding us to walk in love. If we love we will walk perfectly, fulfilling the law of Christ. In light of what God is preparing for us, this is a small request. I believe there are two things that God would have this generation (Church) know. First, to get rid of the extra baggage, those do's and don'ts that weigh us down. They may mean something to us, but God is not nearly as interested as we are in our sacrifices. It's you and I that He's after. And second, I believe God desires His people to know of the wonderful things He is preparing for them. We may be preachers of the good news but we are also recipients

As seen in the parable of the unforgiving servant, God expects us to do for others what He has done for us. Who are we to judge others when we were once in the same boat? As the old saying goes, "But for the grace of God there go I. God forgave us

and we are to forgive others. Yet even beyond this, He calls us to keep in mind the day that He will return to judge the nations and set up His kingdom in the earth. It becomes clear to see why Jesus commands us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. One of the main reasons is because of judgment. The day will come when the doors of grace will be shut and the opportunity for salvation will be over. Today the door is open, but on that day it will be shut. Is it any wonder why Jesus commanded us to live our lives as we do on earth? Our enemies and those who persecuted us for Christ's sake will fall under the hand of God's judgment. When we come into the kingdom and begin to grasp the reality of God's coming judgment on the earth, we begin to have compassion for those who reject Him because we know what awaits them. It's a sobering thought, isn't it? God wants men saved. He doesn't want to send people to hell. There are few today who speak of hell, but hell is a real place. It was never designed for man. God doesn't send people to hell; they send themselves there by rejecting His Son. God placed His anger towards sin on His Son at Calvary to provide a way of escape for those who would believe. Jesus said that those who believe would be saved but those who refused were condemned already for not believing in the only begotten Son of God. (**John 3:18**)

There are three major reasons for right conduct here on earth. The number one reason is that Jesus commanded us. God's Word should have preeminence in our lives. Obedience is better than sacrifice.

The second reason is for the lost. We are God's representatives here on earth. The judgment that will take place for unbelievers, (also known as the great White throne judgment) is not for reward, but for eternal condemnation for rejecting the Gospel. (**Revelation 20:11**) For this reason we should live lives worthy of God so that our words and deeds may lead others to the truth.

The third reason is because of the account each of us will give on the day that believers are judged (also known as the judgment seat of Christ). This judgment determines reward for the faithful and punishment for the hypocrites. (**Romans 14:10**) I don't know about you, but I want a reward. I live in the city by God's preference not my own. It's about doing His will. We will have all of eternity to enjoy the reward of our labors. I believe many have a distorted view of what heaven looks like. I don't know exactly how everything will play out, but the one thing I do know is that we will rule and reign with Christ in the earth. Isaiah alludes to the future reign of Christ in the earth. (**Isaiah 65**) The kingdom may be in our hearts today, but you can be assured that one day our faith will take on flesh and the kingdom will be established in the earth forever. It's what we are living and believing for. In closing here the words of Peter as they relate to how we should live in the earth.

*And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites when he judges. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time as foreigners here on earth. For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. He paid for you with the precious lifeblood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him for this purpose*

*long before the world began, but now in these final days, he was sent to the earth for all to see. And he did this for you. 1 Peter 1:17-20*

## **The Way of the Cross**

*Then Jesus said to the disciples, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must put aside your selfish ambition, shoulder your cross, and follow me. 25 If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life. 26 And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul in the process? Is anything worth more than your soul? 27 For I, the Son of Man, will come in the glory of my Father with his angels and will judge all people according to their deeds. 28 And I assure you that some of you standing here right now will not die before you see me, the Son of Man, coming in my Kingdom."(Matt 16:24-28)*

Opinions are like armpits; everybody has one. God's Word speaks for itself, yet it seems we have a zillion interpretations on what it means. When we see God's Word in light of the big picture, it speaks for itself. It seems we bog ourselves down with so many things that really don't matter. Jesus told us to take up our cross. We don't need more bible interpreters in the church today, we need disciples. And that's where you and I come in.

Doctrine doesn't set Christianity apart from all world religions; the message of the cross as it relates to the kingdom does on the other hand. Jesus didn't come to set up a world religion; He came to bring the good news of the coming Kingdom. The good news would speak for itself. We don't need more doctrinal information, we need a kingdom experience. What good is it to pump our heads full of information if we don't use it? This is where the cross comes in. We have been converted to good doctrine while lacking in understanding of the kingdom. Selfish ambition will go and the kingdom experience will come when we gain a proper understanding of our purpose. When all is said and done our purpose will be the one thing standing, God's good news to planet earth. There's no reason to strive and battle for positions and titles when we see God's ultimate plan for our lives. Let us remember that promotion does not come from the east or the west, but comes from the Lord. God will leave no stone unturned, He has promised to give each of us our portion so why keep fighting for things that don't matter. It's time to take up our cross and live our lives for the glory of God and His kingdom. He won't forget about you when you do. Dying to ourselves is hard yet wonderful in light of the good news. There has to be an understanding in the land of The Gospel. To see it and comprehend the justice as well as the mercy of God has the ability to transform us as believers; and not only us, but the world. The cross, accompanied with a kingdom perspective eliminates the legalism and religion that plagues our society today. We have to comprehend this so we can see what we're fighting for. The battle is not in vain. Paul speaks of dying that others may live. He learned what it meant to take up his cross. Take up your cross; there

are people in your path that are gasping for the Gospel. Take up your cross as Jesus did and countless others before you. Jesus and the disciple turned the world upside down by bearing their cross, not by mere doctrines.

What have we made of the gospel today? Can there be a kingdom without a cross? The gospel we have preached centers around man. We preach a man centered gospel. The Gospel that has been preached in the church today has no future. If what we preach only caters to the here and now then how likely are we as believers to take up our cross for the kingdom's sake. Not likely, right? We have preached good news about Jesus, but have somehow managed to leave out Jesus' message. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Think about it. Many believers live their lives in the church today with no hope of the future; as though there's no end to the gospel. The Word of the Lord over your life fits within a bigger picture. It doesn't end when you die; it's a multi-generational word.

We need to understand the kingdom as the patriarchs did so that we can leave a legacy and see the work of God passed down to the next generation. When it ceases to be about the kingdom, we may be used by God but it will usually end when we die. Understanding the Gospel will produce a multi-generational move of God that I believe will usher in the return of the Lord. It is with this mindset that we will take up our cross and see the Gospel preached to the ends of the earth. If we can see how our lives fit into God's perfect plan and get out of ourselves we will begin to see the ability of God rise up on the inside of us to accomplish His purpose in the earth. We model the kingdom now for hope of the promise then. Until we understand the gospel we will struggle at bearing our cross and modeling the life of the kingdom.