

The Distortion of the 8 Beatitudes in Celebrate Recovery Programs

The 8 beatitudes found in Matthew 5 of the "sermon on the mount" are listed as follows (taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatitudes>):

The 8 beatitudes in [Matthew 5:3-12](#) during the [Sermon on the Mount](#) are stated as *Blessed are:*^{[3][2]}

the poor in spirit: for theirs is the [kingdom of heaven](#). (5:3)

they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. (5:4)

the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. (5:5)

they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. (5:6)

the [merciful](#): for they shall obtain [mercy](#). (5:7)

the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (5:8)

the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. (5:9)

they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (5:10)

Here is how the 8 beatitudes appear along with the principles found in Celebrate Recovery:

Celebrate Recovery
Revised 2004-08-12 Principles-1

The Road To Recovery ~ Based on the Beatitudes

Realize I'm not God: I admit that I am powerless to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and my life is unmanageable. (Step 1)

"Happy are those who know they are spiritually poor." Matthew 5:3

Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover. (Step 2)

"Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Mathew 5:4

Consciously choose to commit all my life and will to Christ's care and control. (Step3)

"Happy are the meek." Matthew 5:5

Openly examine and confess my faults to myself, to God, and to someone I trust. (Steps 4 & 5)
"Happy are the pure in heart." Matthew 5:8

Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects. (Steps 6 & 7)
"Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires." Matthew 5:6

Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others. (Steps 8 & 9)
"Happy are the merciful." "Happy are the peacemakers." Matthew 5:7, 9

Reserve a daily time with God for self-examination, Bible reading, and prayer in order to know God and His will for my life and to gain the power to follow His will. (Steps 10 & 11)

Yield myself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others, both by my example and by my words. (Step 12)
"Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires." Matthew 5:10

What are some distortions/contradictions found in CR's principles included with the 8 beatitudes?

First, did anyone notice the acronym which is spelled out? It spells out the word "recovery" from the principles and the beatitudes. According to <http://www.freedictionary.com>, the word "recovery" as a noun can be defined as, "the return to a normal condition". The focus of the word "recovery" constantly points to a person's past rather than their present condition and future potential in Jesus Christ. People in 12 step "recovery" programs are asked to constantly repair their past in order to "get to where they need to be in Jesus Christ." There is no evidence in scripture that anyone who has been totally forgiven of his or her sins must repeatedly return to his or her past. Pretend that one day you are driving down a road. If you constantly are looking behind you and looking in the rearview mirror instead of paying attention to the road conditions in front of you, how are you going to safely get to where you need to go? People who are told they will "never recover" from their past are given a subtle message. Even though they are never told in rooms at recovery meetings, the underlying implication is that by focusing on one's past, he or she is still being held in bondage to sin and that the atoning death of Jesus Christ was not enough to pay the penalty for his or her sins. Furthermore, there is a key question which needs to be asked. What can you do, if anything, to change your past? If no single person can do anything to "change their past", why hold people "responsible" for choices which cannot be changed in a previous life?

Consider the following:

What about the thief on the cross (read Luke 23)? When the thief expressed genuine repentance over his sins, Jesus said, "Today, you will be with Me in paradise." (23:43) There is no evidence Jesus asked him to take "responsibility" for any of his past sinful choices before he could be completely forgiven of his sins.

Additionally, if the word "recovery" is Biblically accurate, then how come people who came to Jesus for healing were completely healed once and for all? Why didn't Jesus say, "I can only partially heal you, and your condition will be constantly in the process of healing for the rest of your life?" If recovery was accurate from this standpoint, then those healed by Jesus would be **in the process of healing**, not be made whole.

Scripture References (for calling of disciples):

Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, John 1:40-42, Luke 5:1-11 / . . . Jesus calls the fishermen

Luke 5:27-32 . . . Jesus calls Levi

Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:14-19, Luke 6:12-16 . . . Jesus calls the twelve

John 1:43-51 . . . Jesus calls Philip and Nathanael

John 12:4, 6 . . . Judas

John 20:26-28 . . . Thomas

When Jesus called His disciples to follow Him, how come there is no evidence in the synoptic gospel accounts, that Jesus ever required His disciples to return to their past? Again, if "recovery" is "Biblical", would Jesus not have required His disciples to constantly focus on their past in order to change their present and future spiritual conditions?

What about the prostitute at a Pharisee's house who was forgiven of her sins (Luke 7: 36-51) or the woman caught in the very act of adultery (John 8: 1-11)? Why were their sins immediately forgiven, and why didn't Jesus require that their past be held against them as a condition of forgiveness of their sins?

The apostle Paul made it clear in two Bible passages, 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Philippians 3: 12-13, that those who are new creations in Jesus Christ should press forward by faith, not look back to the things behind them.

One conclusion should be made with the use of the term "recovery". If we constantly see a pattern that people forgiven of their sins and healed in scripture were never asked to return to their past as a condition of forgiveness and healing, then how can the term "recovery" be Biblically accurate in the first place?

Secondly, to use the beatitudes as a foundational basis for "solving one's addictions" is a complete distortion of the real meaning behind the beatitudes. Listen to what T.A. Macmahon (Berean call ministry) had to say about this when he visited Celebrate Recovery's annual summit conference in 2005, "CR's attempt to use the Beatitudes as biblical principles for overcoming habitual sins, for example, is a serious distortion of the Word of God.

Search as you may, you'll find no commentaries that even hint at such a use of the Beatitudes. Why? Simply because the Beatitudes all have to do with seeking the Kingdom of God and nothing to do with solving an individual's so-called addictions. Again, why try to legitimize from Scripture Wilson's "ungodly counsel" from "seducing spirits [bringing] doctrines of devils" ([1 Tim 4:1](#))?

Consider, for example, the "Beatitudes-justified" first three steps: (1) We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors. That our lives had become unmanageable. "Happy are those who are spiritually poor." (2) Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. "Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." (3) Made a decision to turn our life and our will over to the care of God (modified from A.A.'s "God as we understood Him"). "Happy are the meek." This is more than a misdirected attempt to sanctify (in Rick Warren's words) Bill Wilson's "biblically vague" 12 Steps.² It both abuses the Scriptures and reinterprets Wilson."

A third problem with Celebrate Recovery's use of the beatitudes is the misrepresentation of the term "blessed". One will notice CR replaces the word "blessed" with the term "happy". The term "happens" is derived from the word "happiness". It relates to a person's momentary feelings of being "happy" but is never intended to be permanent or extended. A good illustration of this principle is if you were to watch a sporting event of some nature (e.g., football, basketball, baseball, etc.). The home team is scoring point after point and expanding their lead in a particular game. Suddenly, the team and the fans who were once "happy" the team was on its way to winning find themselves at a severe low. The visiting team makes a vicious comeback, takes their first lead, and ultimately holds on to win the game. The home team and fans who were certain they would leave with smiles on their faces now leave feeling dejected after a loss. The wrong impression it gives to newcomers and participants? Many will experiment to see if they will really be "happy" after obtaining periods of "sobriety". Sadly, many will discover their "happiness" does not last extensively. How come? They were promised one thing, that is, a life that is "worry-free of pain, suffering, and trials" and got another after making a commitment - pain, suffering, and persecution. When Jesus pronounced the word "blessed", it was meant to reveal those who obey the beatitudes will be given God's blessings but in the process would be suffer pain, and persecution. A person completely sold-out to obedience to Jesus Christ will inevitably encounter suffering and difficulties in this life. People affiliated with Celebrate Recovery somehow want people to believe they can be "receptients" of God's "blessings" without enduring the suffering, difficulties, and persecution that typically accompany a person who lives righteously before the Lord.

Let us now contrast the word "happy" with the word "joy". The term "joy" implies one remains joyful regardless of circumstances (read Philippians 4:4; James 1: 2-3). The person can internally remain victorious with joy without consideration to the externals surrounding his or her conditions. For example, a person diagnosed with cancer, a person who just was laid-off from a job in a failing economy, and a football player who was just injured in a game can still be full of joy in the Spirit without regard to their conditions. There is a saying, "Faith makes things possible, not easy." For a program to tell its newcomers and membership they will be "happy" if they apply the beatitudes to their lives is a serious misinterpretation and distortion of God's word.

Let us now examine how the principles from the beatitudes have been taken out of context and entirely distorted. A few examples:

Earnestly believe that God exists, that I matter to Him, and that He has the power to help me recover. (Step 2)

“Happy are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Mathew 5:4

Notice CR uses the phrase "power to help me recover" then proceeds to quote Matthew 5:4 as the accompanying beatitude. There are some issues here with this "correlation". First, how is God going to give someone His "power" to help someone "recover"? As we have already established, "recovery" focuses on one's past and holds a person accountable and in bondage to the sins committed in a past life. It is obvious CR is giving God "credit" for doing an act which is really nothing more than a demonic work of Satan. Satan is the one who holds people in bondage to their past and tells them they will never be forgiven and fully recover. Additionally, because of this distortion, people who participate in Celebrate Recovery small groups will find out why members are "mourning" for the wrong reason. They mourn because they want people to feel sorry for them (a "woe is me" attitude) instead of genuine mourning as moved by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a difference between a person who mourns because he or she is broken over his or her sins, and a person who mourns because he or she simply wants people to feel sorry for himself or herself (compare the genuine brokenness of the heart found in Psalm 51:17 versus and in contrast to people who simply want others to feel sorry for them, for instance read John 6: 60-66). From my own experience and in speaking to those who have been set free from Celebrate Recovery, members in CR small groups express self-pity in sharing which is nothing more than a demonic spirit at work instead of a move of the Holy Spirit.

One will also notice CR correlates this beatitude with step 2. As mentioned in the critique of the 12 steps, step 2 refers to a "power greater than ourselves." CR's version is a distortion of the correct identity of Jesus Christ. Instead of being identified as the Son of God who died on the cross for all mankind's sins and His ultimate resurrection, CR incorrectly labels Him as nothing more than a "higher power". It now makes sense how one's "higher power" will keep him or her in bondage to sin. Allah cannot forgive and cleanse you of your sins. Likewise, your sponsor and accountability partners cannot provide cleansing of a sinful heart against a holy God. One must correctly mourn over sins calling upon the name of Jesus Christ as God's Son to be totally forgiven, not some "higher power" who will only hold one in bondage to sin.

Voluntarily submit to every change God wants to make in my life and humbly ask Him to remove my character defects. (Steps 6 & 7)

“Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires.” Matthew 5:6

Here we notice the phrase "remove my character defects". As mentioned in the critique part of the 12 steps, the term "character defects" is a suppressed term meant to appear as inoffensive to those who really should repent entirely of their sins against God's holiness. We also notice the beatitude used is from Matthew 5:6, "Happy are those whose greatest desires is to do what God requires." How is someone "doing what God requires" by asking to remove "character defects" but not deliberate, willful sin? Most clinical psychologists tell their clients that they simply have "character defects" or "bad habits" which need assistance to be "removed". Notice in God's word,

the Bible, that in order to be brought in right fellowship with Jesus Christ, one must repent entirely of his or her sins against God's holiness to be totally forgiven (read Luke 13: 1-5; Acts 26:20; 2 Corinthians 7: 9-10). Simply asking God to "remove a character defect" or "bad habit" does not imply that person is completely cleansed and forgiven of his or her sins.

Evaluate all my relationships. Offer forgiveness to those who have hurt me and make amends for harm I've done to others, except when to do so would harm them or others. (Steps 8 & 9)
"Happy are the merciful." "Happy are the peacemakers." Matthew 5:7, 9

While I actually will agree with the importance of forgiving others who have hurt us in our past, I still question the validity of making "amends" to people who members had harmed, especially in many cases where the harm was done several years beforehand. As stated in the critique of the 12 steps, we see a pattern of immediate action when harming another person that Jesus expects us to make, not procrastinating and waiting a definitive amount of time to amend and/or offer restitution. With this fact in mind, let us examine and strongly question the use of the beatitude "happy are the peacemakers" pertaining to the "amends" offered so much time after the fact. How is someone truly a "peacemaker" who is expected to go back in time and offer an "amend" to people who were harmed so much time in the past (in some instances, this may be years)? In many cases, the offended person who was harmed would have good cause to question the sincerity and honesty of such "amends" - the offended party could easily and reasonably ask, "If you are truly honest and sincere, what are your motives? How come your 'amends' are being offered several years after you harmed me? For what reason were the 'amends' not offered at the initial point of the harm done which was several years ago? Why should I believe you now whereas offering amends at the time of the incident would make me believe you were much more honest and sincere in your motives?"

There is also an additional contradiction with Celebrate Recovery using the beatitude "happy are the peacemakers". If people affiliated with Celebrate Recovery were truly "peacemakers", explain to me why they warmly embrace the secular 12 step membership of other groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, etc. etc.? Is warmly embracing and accepting the belief systems of other groups which most do not even believe and trust in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior acting as a "peacemaker"? Listen to the words of Jesus from the Gospel of Mark pertaining to dividing instead of bringing peaceful unity in His name, "And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself. And the scribes which came down from Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the devils casteth He out the devils. And He called them unto Him, and said unto them in parables, How can Satan cast out Satan? And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if an house be divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan hath risen up against himself, and is divided, he cannot stand, but hath an end. But no one can enter into the house of the strong man, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house." [Mark 3:20-27](#) (R.V.) Is Celebrate Recovery truly not divided against itself when it claims to be a "Christ-centered" program, yet at the same time, fails to speak the truth in God's love and accepts the unscriptural belief systems of other secular 12 step programs? How can Celebrate Recovery use the name of Jesus Christ in its

program and teachings when it has only contradicted itself and allowed demonic spirits to be a contributing factor to its overall structure?

Yield myself to God to be used to bring this Good News to others, both by my example and by my words. (Step 12)

"Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires." Matthew 5:10

When CR uses the term "Good News", which "Good News"? The "Good News" of the "gospel" of Celebrate Recovery, or the Biblical "Good News" of Jesus Christ, that is His death, burial, resurrection to those lost and dying in sin? (read 1 Corinthians 15: 1-4) The following link has been provided for viewers of this website:

http://www.celebraterecovery.com/?page_id=1916

The reason I am posting this link is to support my position that it is definitely not the Good news of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. When one reads Rick Warren's introduction to the Celebrate Recovery program, he or she will discover that RW is bringing glory to a program, not glory, honor, and praise to Jesus Christ, God's Son. Unfortunately, this same attitude is echoed through the closed doors of the majority of Celebrate Recovery meetings. Members who have been affiliated with Celebrate Recovery for months and years will constantly boast what the "program has done for me" but rarely if ever will give proper credit to Jesus Christ ultimately bringing deliverance to someone's life from habitual sin. You will hear phrases such as, "The program has done this for me, and the program has done that for me." Exalting a program over Jesus Christ, the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings is idolatry, plain and simple. A 12 step program cannot save someone's soul from an eternity in hell. If someone wants forgiveness of his or her sins, that person must call upon the name of Jesus Christ, confess sins, repent of his or her sins, and trust in Him entirely as Lord and Savior. You cannot bring glory to a program and attempt to bring glory to Jesus Christ at the same time (read Matthew 6:24). No one can serve two masters. Either "worshiping" a program will send a person to eternal hell or worshiping and righteously bringing glory to Jesus Christ will grant someone eternal life.

One will also notice the beatitude that is used for this principle, "Happy are those who are persecuted because they do what God requires." From my own experience at Celebrate Recovery, what persecution actually took place for spreading the "Good News" of a 12 step program? In fact, I never recall members claiming they faced persecution for the name of Jesus Christ in group meetings during my entire 2 1/2 years as a regular attendee at CR locations. Since we have already established that CR embraces and accepts the unscriptural teachings of secular 12 step groups, CR membership would be wise to heed the warning of Jesus found in Luke 6:26, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets."

A final analysis to be provided about the 8 beatitudes and the principles is as follows. **People in CR are wrongly trusting in the principles and the beatitudes alone to transform their lives. The problem with doing this is no different than a person who merely reads God's word but does not apply His word to their lives for transformation. Jesus Christ, God's Son, is the One who truly can transform a person's heart for change. An illustration - if you drive**

a vehicle and the gas went empty, would you not need gasoline to refill your tank so that you can continue driving? If you knew the gasoline was used to help vehicles run but failed to put any into your vehicle, you would not be driving anywhere. The 8 beatitudes are meant to assist believers in Jesus Christ to transform their lives, but without fully trusting in Jesus Christ as the One who ultimately changes and transforms people's hearts, the 8 beatitudes do nothing more than appear as ink on paper.

It makes no sense how an entire group attempts to integrate the 12 steps as part of the 8 beatitudes? As mentioned before, the beatitudes Jesus was speaking about is a way to live contrary to the standards of this world. On the other hand, the beatitudes were not meant to be misintrepreted and distorted as a "foundational basis" for people to find freedom from addictive behaviors through 12 step groups. Furthermore, how is it possible to intertwine the belief systems of a program which repeatedly takes God's word out of context and attempt to claim one can find freedom through the beatitudes? Many cult groups such as the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, the Watchtower Society, and the New Age movement take God's word out of context and merely corrupt it to advance their own agendas. How is what Celebrate Recovery is doing any different than these other cult groups? If we truly want freedom from habitual sin, we can only find it through Jesus Christ, God's Son. Why do we need psychology and 12 step groups to dictate to us how to find "freedom" when God has already told us how to find freedom from sin through His word, the Bible for several hundred years and Jesus Christ already offered us freedom from sin through His death and ultimate resurrection over 2,000 years ago?