

# The Key to a Happy New Year

by Jim Cymbala

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*The key to a happy new year lies in recognizing our spiritual poverty and relying on God's grace and blessings.*

**Duration:** 28:09

**Scripture:** Psalm 37:4, Isaiah 66:2, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 6:33, Matthew 11:28-30, John 10:10, James 4:10

**Topics:** "New Year"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of humility and poverty of spirit in finding happiness in the new year. He refers to the first public teaching of Jesus, where He sat on a mountainside and opened His mouth to speak. The speaker emphasizes the need to stoop low and live with humility to avoid unnecessary problems and conflicts. He also highlights the significance of hungering for God's word and being spiritually hungry, rather than being complacent and full. The sermon concludes with a reference to Benjamin Franklin's experience of learning the value of stooping low to avoid obstacles.

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## Transcript

How many try to read the Bible every day? Lift your hand. Every day, no, you gotta read the Bible. Apple a day keeps the doctor away.

The word of God every day builds us up. In the last eight days, nine days, the most repeated phrase in the world, well, our country for sure, has been, Happy New Year. Happy New Year.

It is said by people who don't know Christ in a kind of good luck way. You know, like, what does that mean when you say to someone, Happy New Year? What are you really saying? People in the world would say, what I mean is, I wish you good luck this year. I wish you good luck, have a good year.

That's how people say, hey, listen, Happy New Year, you don't even know the person. Happy New Year, Happy New Year. In other words, for the person in the street who doesn't know about Christ, it's, I hope you have good luck.

But there is no luck. Now, to a Christian, a Christian would say, Happy New Year. May God's blessing be upon you.

May God provide what you need. May you draw closer to God, right? We mean it in a deeper way, right? Now, God, every day of our lives, is saying, happy, have a happy day. Every day.

God doesn't exist in time, but let's make, believe in the sense that God is saying to us, Happy New Year. God wants us to have a great, he knows we observe years, we live in time, he lives in eternity. So God is saying, have a happy new year.

Have a great year. But God goes further, and then tells us how to have a happy good year. When people in the street say, Happy New Year, it's good luck.

When we say it, it's like, my prayer is, my wish is that God will help you. But when God says it, he tells us the secret of having a happy new year. And that's the name of this message.

The secret, or the key, to a happy new year. And it's so difficult for us to comprehend this. Just close your eyes for a second.

Lord, your ways are not our ways. Give me grace to speak. Give us all help to hear and understand your mysterious ways.

Because it's so unnatural to us. Help us to learn, we pray in Jesus' name. And the passage I want to talk to you about, just one, a couple verses, but it's very short, are the first, could be the first public words Jesus ever gave in a teaching.

At 30, he started to his public ministry, got baptized, and then he went up on a hill, on a mountain, and he opened his mouth. And when the Bible says he opened his mouth, that means whatever's coming, listen carefully, because it just doesn't say he said, it said he opened his mouth. So now this is important.

You know this passage. Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and he sat down, his disciples came to him. So he was sitting, not like I'm standing.

Probably sat on a rock. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them, saying, and it seems like they were closer and the crowd was beyond them. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Poverty of any kind to our minds means problems. When you're short and don't have what you need, that is never good to our way of thinking. Nobody just says, oh, listen, I got to talk to you.

I'm so happy today. I just lost my job. Somebody got a hold of my personal information, emptied my bank accounts.

I have nothing, come on, let's high five. Oh, I'm so happy. Nobody does that.

The world tells us to lack is a downer. Who are the important people? The ones who have, the ones who have an abundance. Now, the Lord is not saying here, blessed are the poor.

He's saying, blessed are the poor in spirit. For theirs is the kingdom of heaven and it could be the first words that he ever said publicly that were heard and broadcast around. What are the first words Jesus ever taught? Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

They'll not only end up in the kingdom of heaven, everything that the kingdom of heaven has is gonna come into their lives and that's why they're blessed and happy and to be envied. Oh, these people are phenomenally in a great place because they are poor in spirit. Yes, Lord, this is one of those messages where there'll be few amens, but help me to be faithful, Lord.

One translation has that verse, blessed are those who sense their spiritual poverty and their needs. The word for poor here is not the normal word for poor in the Greek. It's a word that means cringing, crouching beggar.

I should have called this message, blessed are the beggars. We're stunned by that because it's so against our American way of thinking. Blessed are the beggars, the spiritual beggars.

Blessed are those people who only have nothing and they sense their nothingness. They don't have what they need. So when you don't have what you need and you can't get what you need, what do you do? You ask for what you need.

Oh, how blessed are those who crouch and beg because they sense their poverty and their lack of resources for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. No wonder a lot of people didn't follow Jesus. No wonder there aren't a lot of Christians today because unless God gives you understanding, you go, what are you talking about? And if you're sitting here and you're not a Christian or if you're kind of a worldly, carnal-thinking Christian, you're saying, pass the symbol, sell that to somebody else.

I don't want to hear about poverty of spirit. I want to assert myself. You're not talking to a fool.

Maybe you're not educated. Maybe you're not too bright. Maybe you don't have much of this world's goods, but I got this thing together.

Then you're not blessed. You are not blessed and will never be blessed by God. For blessed are the poor in spirit, those who sense their spiritual poverty, their spiritual weakness, the fact they can't make it.

Whenever somebody senses they can't make it and they reach out their hands, God says, oh, I will supply for you now. Oh, I will fight for you now. But the person who's independent and self-sufficient, what's the opposite of the word blessed? It's woe.

In Luke chapter six, when he gives his account, maybe at a different time of Jesus teaching similarly, it's balanced with not only the blessings, which we call the beatitudes, but there's a woe, woe unto you, and then blessed are you. Matthew doesn't have that. He just has the beatitudes as we know them, traditionally blessed are those who mourn, they will be comforted.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be. But the first thing he said is blessed, happy. Moses went up on a mountain and got the law, but Jesus went up on a mountain and the first thing he said was, God wants you to be happy.

God wants you to enjoy spiritual prosperity. God wants you to have everything you need. God wants you to have joy and peace, and joy unspeakable and peace that the world can't give.

God wants you to have the shalom that the Old Testament talks about. But the only ones who are gonna enjoy that are those who live a life who are bankrupt in spirit. They're poor in spirit.

They sense their poverty. Someone has well said, the law that's found in the Old Testament that Moses gave really is supposed to lead you and me to a place of poverty of spirit. It's supposed to make us give up.

The law was not given to save anyone, otherwise Jesus Christ wouldn't have come. Why was the law given with all those commandments? To make you and I read them and go, no way, Jose, can I do that. I

cannot do that.

And then Jesus, his teachings, if someone slaps you, turn the other cheek. Who in the world of us has that? Love one another even as I have loved you? Be perfect even as your heavenly father is perfect? If a person is honest and they read the Bible and they read the commands of God, the purpose of it is to drive you and I to a place of no way, I can't even try. I've tried for 20 times.

I've tried 2,000 times. And every time I try, I fail. So God, I just lift my hands and say, it's not in me, I can't do this.

I can't be what you want me to be. Has anyone ever come to that place in their life? If you're sincere, you get to that place. God, I cannot be.

And God says, what? You've come to that place of poverty of spirit? Oh, are you blessed? Now that word blessed means happy, to be envied, blessed by God, in a position of favor with God. That word blessed is a very rich word. So who is the person favored by God? Who's the person that God is going to look out for? Who's the person that's going to receive God's choices, blessings? The one who is poor in spirit.

Not the one with an education. Not white people, not black people. God doesn't favor black people, white people.

He doesn't know from color. Education means nothing. But I come from my island.

He doesn't care about your island. He made all those islands. He's going to burn up all the islands and all the countries.

What he treasures and looks for is someone who's poor in spirit. The opposite of self-assertive. The opposite of, I got this thing together.

Everything heaven has is waiting for the person who's poor in spirit. When was the last time you heard anybody say, come on brother, before we leave the choir practice, let's pray, God, make us poor in spirit. Take away our pride and our self-sufficiency and make us poor in spirit.

When was the last time you heard anybody pray that? It's the first thing Jesus said. Oh, we pray, God, give me a new job. God, give me a better car.

God, give me a nicer place to live. That's how the world has so invaded our mind. But Jesus said the thing to be treasured the most is to have a poor spirit.

To be broken and sense your need of God. Because the opposite of poverty of spirit is what? Proud. And what do we know in the Bible about pride? God resists the what? The whoremonger.

No. God resists the drug addict. Nope, doesn't ever say that.

God resists the drunkard. God resists whatever. No, it never says that.

Who does he resist? He sets himself up like a king with an army to bring them down. That's what that word means, resist. He resists the proud.

And even from the Old Testament, as I wrap this up, we have found this has always been the principle with God. Look what Isaiah says at the end of his book, the end of his writings, Isaiah 66. God says, has

not my hand made all these things and so they came into being, declares the Lord? This is the one that I esteem.

He who is humble and contrite and spirit broken over their failures, feeling bad about it, full of repentance and confession, and who trembles at my word. Who is the one that I esteem? How could God esteem anyone? He's God. God doesn't look for high people.

He looks for low people. He who's humble and contrite and spirit and trembles at my word. The person who just walks in humility and lowliness, always rooting for the other person, always wanting to mention the other person, not what they've done, mention the other person, esteem the other person.

And why there's no amens rocking the church is because we are all saying right now, woe is me, God, woe is me. How many could use more in 2012, a big injection of humility and poverty of spirit? No, because that's the way we naturally are. Just think, by not being, having this poverty of spirit, this is the root.

If a pastor's smart, he'll know this is the root behind all the problems in the Christian's life, in the choir's life, okay? I'll tell you right now, you see this is the altos, right? Altos and some tenors. I'll tell you the person here who reads their Bible the most and craves it the most every day, the person who's most poor in spirit because they know they can't make it without hearing from God. Oh no, pastor, charge them and get them all worked up and say, let's read the word every day.

Come on, how long do you think that will last? Come on, be real. Haven't you ever psyched yourself up to read the Bible? How long did it last? I've had times in my life, it's like 48 hours. You know, I'm all spiritual and then there's a good baseball game on or something and that's the end of that, right? Nah, but in that section, the person who says, if he doesn't feed my soul, I can't make it today.

What are you talking about? You can make it, you go girl. No, this girl says, no, no, no, I can't make it unless he talks to me. So I'll get out of the bed at night.

I got to read, I got to read. Because it's only the person who's hungry who craves the food. But if you're full, then this word doesn't mean much.

So some people in this building, you haven't read the Bible in a week, why? Because you don't think you need it. Because if you thought you'd need it, you'd do it. Because we all do what we're driven to do.

And when you're poor, you're driven to beg. God, I need a word from you. I need strength from you.

I can't make it, oh, I have some muscles, I have some strength, thank you for the food you've given me, Lord, and my body. But I can't make it inside unless you feed me. But unless you feel that, this book is like a pain.

You just read it because, oh, I'm a Christian, I got to read today. That's not the way we're supposed to read the Bible. Think the same thing about prayer.

Who's the one who prays? Who's the man of prayer? The one who says, I can't make it another day unless you come and help me. God, are you kidding me? I'm at your throne of grace because I need mercy. I see my sins and I see my failures.

Shouldn't talk to my wife that way, would you forgive me, Lord? And shouldn't have never talked to my husband that way. And I was very rude to that other person. Lord, forgive me.

And now you promised me grace. God, I need strength to make it. I feel myself getting weak.

Well, of course, the poor in spirit is going to be praying. The poor in spirit is going to be reading the word. Why? They have to.

They're starving. They feel their impotency. And that's why Jesus said, first thing, first sentence that he ever spoke, blessed are the poor in spirit because they're going to get everything from God.

There's something about poverty of spirit that draws God. Whenever God sees someone who's broken and drawn, you say, Pastor Cimbala, no, the televangelists do not teach that. I wouldn't care what any televangelist teaches.

I'm telling you what Jesus said. Blessed are the poor in spirit. In fact, people, I have found this watching this since a kid, is that some people like a minister who brags and prances around and shows off himself.

They like that because that's their spirit. But they would have never liked Jesus because Jesus was meek and lowly. Jesus was empty so he could be filled with whatever the Father had for him.

Think back over the Bible, the people that stand out. Who's the greatest person in the Old Testament? Well, I think there's two great people, two of the greatest names. Think of Moses.

Moses, the Bible says, became the meekest, most broken, empty man on the face of the earth. So God became his friend and talked to him like a friend. This is who am I, I'm a sinner.

God's not looking for PhDs. He knows everything. Why would your degree or my degree mean anything to him? No, I just made it big on the market.

He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. Your money means nothing. Your talent means nothing.

What God is looking for is that person who's lowly, who's contrite in spirit and who trembles at his word. Blessed are the poor in spirit. So Moses got so low, got so empty of self, got so dependent on God, one day he married an African woman, dark-skinned woman from Cush, which is Ethiopia, which is where my grandson comes from.

Just a little word there. And Moses married this Cushite woman, and she was someone who his sister Miriam and his brother Aaron didn't like. And they forgot, hadn't been written yet, but they should've known better.

Mind your own business. Marry who you want. Don't make comments about whoever else someone marries.

Just don't, that's another sign of lack of poverty of spirit. When you have a poverty of spirit, you're just minding your own business because you see you got a lot of business to take care of. But when you're full of yourself, we pass our opinions on everything.

We're telling everyone what we think. Who cares what we think? What God thinks would be a better thing to be discussing, right? But that's what happens when there's no poverty of spirit, is what rips churches

apart and fighting and everybody has their opinion and their word and all of that. Instead of just falling at his feet and praying together and loving each other and having grace with one another's faults.

So they came and said, we don't like this woman, and who are you? Are you the only one that hears from God? And Moses could've said, hey, hey, I'm the one he spoke to out of the burning bush. Who are you? No, you know what he did when they said that? He just fell to the ground. Never said a word.

Now, when you criticize someone and they react by falling to the ground and not saying a word, you better get out of town quick because you have a major problem coming. If they fight back, you're okay. And Moses just fell to the ground and suddenly the cloud moved from above the tabernacle and God said to Miriam and Aaron, who are you to talk about my friend Moses? Do you want God to defend you this year? How many want God to fight their battles this year? Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

If Moses would've been up in Miriam's grill, nothing would've happened. God wouldn't have said a word because here's the way God looks at it. Jim, you wanna fight your battles? Then fight them.

You wanna fight your battles? Then fight them. Sopranos, you wanna argue and make yourself right? Then fight them. Go ahead, do it.

And God will just wait in the wings till you're tired. But if you want God to fight, you have to be poor in spirit. Think of David.

I was just reading in the Psalm the other day. For you are my hiding place, David. You kill Goliath.

You're God's anointed. What are you talking about, you are my hiding place? You don't have to hide from anything. You just go out there, boy.

No, you are my hiding place. You are my strength. Read the Psalms.

Tell me what kind of spirit David had when he was at his best. This is why he was led by the Lord. He had humility not to make decisions without inquiring of the Lord.

A lot of us are full of ourselves. We think we're so smart, so we make decisions. They blow up in our face, and then we want prayer.

And God is saying, if you would have only humbled yourself and said, Lord, the best I know, this looks like the right thing to do, but nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done. You see, you can't do that. You can't do that unless you're operating out of a foundation of poverty of spirit.

The days I've been most sick of myself is when I've been full of myself. How about you? You ever notice that you're full of yourself? You know, if you're full of the devil, it can be cast out. But if you're full of yourself, there's a major problem there.

It's much harder to work with. David was led by God because he was poor in spirit. He was victorious because God will always fight for the person who looks to him.

Have this mind in you that was also in Christ Jesus, Philippians chapter two. Although equal with God, he didn't hold onto it, but he left heaven. He emptied himself of all the glory he had.

He lived in eternity with the glory as the only begotten of the Father. In the mystery of the Trinity, he was their Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and he left all of that to come to a stinking manger. Wasn't he trying to tell us something instead of being born in a palace? He was born in a manger.

He was a carpenter's son. He lived in Nowheresville, Nazareth. Everything about his life was meek and lowly.

I only do the things the Father tells me. I only go where the Father shows me. I only speak the words the Father tells me.

I mean, was there ever a more empty of himself person than Jesus? And therefore, because he humbled himself even to the point of death on a cross, therefore God has highly exalted him because God says, whoever goes down, I will lift up. I did it with my son. I'll do it with all others who'd follow me.

Everyone who goes down, I will lift up. In other words, how this lady got saved is she at one point got to the end of herself and said, I cannot save myself. I need Jesus.

I cannot die and wash my sins away. I need Jesus. And then she learned, after she learned forgiveness through humility and trust in Jesus, and only the humble people can really have faith in God.

If you have faith in yourself, how you gonna have desperate faith in God? Our problem is we trust ourselves and that compromises our faith in God. God, I really need you, but in case you don't work, I got a number of things I'm gonna work this thing out with. So the Bible tells us that when a person gets to the end of themselves, they cast themselves at Jesus' feet and he saves them.

Then as they learn to walk, they realize, wow, I still got an old sin nature in me. I'm not acting the way I ought to. And they try harder and that fails and they come to the place where they say, oh God, you not only have to save me, you have to keep me.

How many have learned he has to keep you every day? Put up both your hands if you know the Lord has to keep you. The Lord, the Lord has to keep me. Otherwise I will self-destruct.

Pastor Symbol, you've been a minister, I will self-destruct unless he keeps me. I was just somewhere over in Italy and in that place they drink wine and I don't partake of wine. I can't argue that it's unbiblical, but I don't do that for a number of reasons.

So they asked me, are you offended if we all drink wine? I said, no, you do what you feel, I'm not judging you. And they said, why don't you take some? I said, listen, my dad took one drink one day and for 22 years was an alcoholic and beat my mother and never made it to my wedding. How do I know that's not in me? How many here have relatives, parents or grandparents that drank or had trouble with drinking? I don't know what predisposition I have to that.

So I wanna be careful. Oh God, help me, I don't wanna start drinking. Pastor Symbol, don't say that, you're a minister.

No, let me say it. God, help me that I don't start drinking. How about all of us? Come on, how about all of us? God, help me that I don't go that way.

Faith grows, blessings come to the poor in spirit. This is a difficult thing to preach because this is not what our flesh wants to hear. Benjamin Franklin, he was a strange mix of a lot of things, Benjamin Franklin, but

he had a lot of insight into certain things.

And he said that one day, he wrote as an older man, he said one day when he was 19 or 20 years old, he was with a very wise man. This is pre-revolutionary war. And he was in the home of this very learned man, godly man.

And they went down into a part of the house that had beams and everything and they were walking and Benjamin Franklin was so transfixed by what the man was saying that he just was listening and looking at the man. And as they were walking down this little corridor, suddenly the man yelled, get down, stoop, stoop. And Franklin didn't know what he meant.

And whammo, he hit a beam, one of those really low beams. The house was oddly constructed. You had to go like this to get past that one part of the hallway.

And Franklin writes at the end of his life, he says, you know, the man turned to me and I learned something valuable. This man was so wise. He said, you've just been hit by that beam.

I'm sorry, I yelled, but you didn't understand what I was saying. He said, listen to me, young man. If I've learned one thing in life, is you will avoid a lot of bruises and a lot of collisions if you just learn to stoop.

If you live low, you'll avoid lots of problems. Does that not resonate with all of us here today? Think back on your own life. Hasn't a lot of the turmoil in our lives come because of our lack of poverty of spirit? We're self-assertive.

We gotta have it our way. If somebody else gets blessed, somebody else sings better, you know, Pam gets up here and sings so good and someone out in the audience visiting from another church is a little intimidated and gets jealous or says, you know, I could do better than that girl. She's not that good.

No, she's not that good. I just heard her. I could do better than that.

And then all that turmoil and poison gets in you instead of just sitting in the balcony and saying, oh God, thank you for Pam. Thank you for Pam's voice. Thank you for Pam's ministry.

And this is the one that God says I'll regard and I'll watch out for and I'll bless all year long.

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