

The First Leg: Orthopathy (“Right Emotion”)

Total Time: 10-15 min

OPENING | 3 min



Read the following aloud.

In the last training, we introduced the image of a three-legged stool to be the grounding image to orient our political discipleship under Jesus. The seat of the stool is where our God resides, and we live the most abundant and fruitful lives under His love and sovereignty. Christ is supreme, and our allegiance is to Him.

This time we're discussing the first leg of our stool, which is our emotional and instinctual life, or *orthopathy*¹. In this context, *orthopathy* means "right feelings," or having emotions that are aligned with God's heart. NYU Professor Jonathan Haidt argues that we process the world emotionally before we engage with it logically. From neurological research, scientists know that information and experiences go through the emotional centers of our brain before they reach the prefrontal cortex where logic resides. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to cultivate an emotional life that is intelligent and mature so that we can respond out of our deepest convictions, values, and beliefs, not our whims, wounds, fears, or preferences.

¹ Runyon, T. (1998). *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Abingdon Press.

The Bible is full of places where God invites us to cultivate an emotional life that aligns with His vision of shalom—peace in all relationships. This divine intention encompasses both our individual lives and the institutions that govern society. One well-known passage that highlights a collective emotional intelligence and maturity aligned with the heart of God is the Beatitudes.

The Beatitudes are a set of teachings by Jesus in Matthew 5:3-12 (NRSVue) and part of the Sermon on the Mount. They describe the attitudes, instincts, and characteristics that are blessed by God and the rewards that He promises. Jesus says:

*Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they will be **comforted**.*

*Blessed are the **meek**, for they will inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst** for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

*Blessed are the **merciful**, for they will be shown mercy.*

*Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they will see God.*

*Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called children of God.*

*Blessed are those who are **persecuted because of righteousness**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Looking at this passage, we can see that God is not necessarily blessing people for their beliefs or actions; instead, He blesses people for their attitudes, postures, and instincts that turn them towards love for Him, neighbors and themselves. Poverty in spirit points to an awareness of a need for God's abounding love and the Kingdom He promises to bring in all its fullness. Mourning requires a connection to self and others that is aware and willing to be engaged with our suffering and that of others. To be meek, merciful, and pure in heart necessitates an instinct towards humility and gentleness. And to hunger, thirst, and make peace implies that we are in touch with and willing to engage with conflict and our own desires and longings for a world more like His Kingdom.

DISCUSSION | 5-10 min

Break into pairs, small groups or remain as a whole group depending on your context and discuss the following questions together.

- What did your family and faith community teach you about your feelings? How does it compare to the invitations from Jesus to feel in this passage?
- What feelings come up for you when you think about campaigns, debates, voting, and other parts of election cycles? Where do you feel yearning, desire peace, or want to mourn?
- Our feelings are often signals for what we value. As you reflect on your anger, sadness, joy, gladness, and other feelings, what do you believe is important to you when you consider politics and civic engagement?

PRAY | 2 min

To close your time, consider the emotions, attitudes, and instincts that God blesses in the Beatitudes. Ask Him to shape your heart to be more aligned with His.

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