

---

# 4 BECOMING RIGHTEOUS

---

*Matthew 5:6; Romans 9:30—10:4*

*For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things. (Psalm 107:9)*

Again and again, Scripture addresses its promises to the hungry. Spiritual hunger is the characteristic of all God's people. Our supreme ambition is not material but spiritual. Christians are not like pagans, engrossed in the pursuit of possessions; what they have set themselves to "seek first" is God's kingdom and righteousness (Matthew 6:33). The fourth beatitude deals with our appetite for the things of God.

## Open

---

- Why is self-righteousness unattractive?

## Study

---

- In the Magnificat Mary said that God "has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty" (Luke 1:53). The spiritually poor

---

and the spiritually hungry were associated, and both were declared blessed. In Jesus' next beatitude this general principle is particularized.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. (Matthew 5:6)

---

1. What do you think it means for a person to "hunger and thirst for righteousness"?

---

2. Jesus promises that those with this spiritual hunger will be filled. Having our hunger satisfied is certainly a blessing. In what senses could we be "blessed" even while we continue to hunger and thirst?

---

3. Why does unrighteousness lead to chronic dissatisfaction?

---

4. How do the hunger and thirst for righteousness resemble physical hunger and thirst?

Righteousness in the Bible has at least three aspects: legal, moral and social. Legal righteousness is justification, a right relationship with God. That cannot be Jesus' meaning here, since he was addressing people who had already been made righteous in the legal sense by belonging to him. Moral righteousness is an inner righteousness of heart, mind and motive. But biblical righteousness is more than a private affair; it includes social righteousness as well. Thus Christians are committed to hunger for righteousness in the whole human community as something pleasing to a righteous God.

5. Despite Jesus' promise that we will be "filled," why do we continue to hunger and thirst for inner righteousness?

In this life our hunger will never be fully satisfied, nor our thirst fully quenched. Like all the qualities in the beatitudes, hunger and thirst are perpetual characteristics of the disciples of Jesus, as perpetual as poverty of spirit, meekness and mourning. Not till we reach heaven can it be said of us, "Never again will they hunger, never again will they thirst," for only then will Christ our Shepherd lead us to "springs of living water" (Revelation 7:16-17).

6. How are you inclined to respond when you see unrighteousness in society? Explain.

- Close my eyes                       Feel despair  
 Get involved in some organized effort  
 Get involved person-to-person  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. In what parts of your life is it easy to see unrighteousness, and in what parts is it difficult?

**Summary:** There is perhaps no greater secret of progress in Christian living than a healthy, hearty spiritual appetite. If we are conscious of slow spiritual growth, the reason may be that we have a jaded appetite. It is not enough to mourn over past sin; we must also hunger for future righteousness.

When we talk about "pursuing righteousness," we must be cautious about our meaning. According to Paul, the Jews failed to attain righteousness because they were seeking legal righteousness. It was the Gentiles who discovered righteousness—by faith.

8. Read Romans 9:30–10:4. Contrast the righteousness of law and the righteousness of faith in Christ.

9. Why is it futile for people to try to establish their own righteousness (10:3)?

10. The righteousness Paul writes about here is "legal righteousness," which those who believe in Jesus have already been given as a gift. In what ways can Christians fall into pursuing righteousness "as if it were by works" (v. 32)?

---

11. How is the pursuit of righteousness by law different from the "hunger and thirst for righteousness" which Stott says Jesus refers to in Matthew 5:6?

### Apply

■ Would you say your "appetite for righteousness" is sharp or dull? Explain.

---

In what areas of society do you long to see more righteousness?

In what areas of your character do you long to be more righteous?

### Pray

■ Praise God that he is perfectly righteous and holy. Ask him to increase your appetite for righteousness both in your own life and in our society. Pray that your life will increasingly reflect God's righteous character.