

KINGDOM
OF
HAPPINESS

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Welcome to Kingdom of Happiness

In the last two years, Saint Benedict Press has brought you several groundbreaking programs. The first was *Doors of Mercy*, a parish and home study that offered participants a whirlwind tour of salvation history and highlighted the depths of God's mercy. We followed that with *Queen of Heaven*, which introduced audiences to their spiritual mother in a deeper and more profound way and showed how she battles the devil to help win souls for her Son.

The next stage of the journey takes us down the path to the *Kingdom of Happiness*.

We live in a fallen world. This reality has become clearer in the last several decades as the secular world has sought to eradicate all traces of God and conquer Christendom. While this larger battle is mostly out of our control, we can take comfort in the fact that we are called to reign in another kingdom and leave the slavery of this world behind.

The best way to throw off the yoke of slavery this world seeks to bind us with is to live out the lessons Our Lord taught us in his Sermon on the Mount, most especially the Beatitudes. Sacred Scripture tells us that Christ “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6–7). He invites us to turn our own worlds upside down as well with these eight life-altering ways of living.

At times, the Beatitudes may seem paradoxical. Why would we want to be poor or meek? Why would we want to mourn? Why would we want to show mercy or be a peacemaker when the world rewards ruthlessness, and pure when it celebrates immorality? Why would we hunger for righteousness when the world has so much else to feed us with? And why would we want to be persecuted?

Yet Christ told us that those who live these ways of life would be blessed. This is what the word *beatitude* means—“blessed”—which also means “happiness.” If we have the courage to trust in his words and follow him, we will come to know what true happiness really is.

It is my hope and prayer that you embark on this journey with my friend, Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, who will show you the path to the kingdom and give you the strength and wisdom to turn your world upside down.

Conor Gallagher, Publisher



The Beatitudes respond to the natural desire for happiness. This desire is of divine origin: God has placed it in the human heart in order to draw man to the One who alone can fulfill it. . . .

The Beatitudes reveal the goal of human existence, the ultimate end of human acts: God calls us to his own beatitude. This vocation is addressed to each individual personally, but also to the Church as a whole, the new people made up of those who have accepted the promise and live from it in faith.

—*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1718–19



KINGDOM OF HAPPINESS

LIVING THE BEATITUDES IN EVERYDAY LIFE

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR GUIDE

What's inside your *Kingdom of Happiness Study Guide*? Here's an overview:

The Study Guide is divided into eight lessons. The following elements appear in each of them.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

It will be helpful to read this short passage before embarking on each lesson.

LESSON READINGS

Each lesson is drawn from the teaching video and is supported by Scripture passages, teachings found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and other writings of the saints and Church Fathers. Each lesson contains short suggested readings pulled from these sources. These readings are optional but will better prepare you for the material. The scriptural texts quoted in the *Study Guide* come from the Revised Standard Version—Second Catholic Edition (Ignatius Edition) translation of the Bible.

OPENING & CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer should be woven into every aspect of our lives, especially when embarking on a study like this. Open each session with an Our Father, which Christ taught us in his Sermon on the Mount just after he taught us about the Beatitudes. The Closing Prayers were composed by Fr. Jeffrey Kirby as a way to bring home the lessons and entrench them in our souls.

VIDEO LESSON: KINGDOM OF HAPPINESS

Embark on the teaching video hosted by Fr. Jeffrey Kirby and learn about the life-changing nature of living out the Beatitudes. Fr. Kirby shows us how Christ turned the world upside down and that we, too, can turn our worlds upside down as we shun the lies of our contemporary culture and instead walk the path to true happiness. Key highlights are provided with room to take notes, which will help you with the group discussion that follows.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

If your study has ten or more participants, you may hold discussions in smaller groups of five to seven. Each small group will have its own discussion leader prepared to guide the group. The small group discussion for each lesson will respond to the study questions. Answers and discussion prompts can be found in the Supplemental Material in the back of your *Study Guide*.

SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

As we look at each of the Beatitudes, this section examines their fascinating connections to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the virtues of the Christian tradition, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and the deadly sins (which for our purposes we may call the "anti-beatitudes").

You will see a kind of "spiritual matrix" unfold before your eyes. This matrix, or chart, outlines a web of connections that link the central tenets of the spiritual life. For the purposes of our "School of Discipleship," we will call these "Subjects."

To help you better understand these "Subjects," brief information about each one has been given here. Read it now and refer back to it, if needed, throughout the program.

School of Discipleship “Subjects”

Christian Virtues: The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* defines virtue as “an habitual and firm disposition to do the good. It allows the person not only to perform good acts, but to give the best of himself. The virtuous person tends toward the good with all his sensory and spiritual powers; he pursues the good and chooses it in concrete actions” (CCC 1803). St. Gregory of Nyssa, in his *De beatitudinibus*, says, “The goal of a virtuous life is to become like God.” The *Catechism* names seven Christian, or “heavenly,” virtues, broken up into two categories. The four cardinal virtues are prudence, justice, temperance, and courage, while the three theological virtues are faith, hope, and charity (see CCC 1804–29).

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: The *Catechism* tells us that “the moral life of Christians is sustained by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These are permanent dispositions which make man docile in following the promptings of the Holy Spirit. . . . They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them” (CCC 1830–31). In short, these are exactly what they sound like—generous gifts from the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, which he bestows upon us at the will of the Father. They allow us to become better and more virtuous people and overcome the pitfalls of the deadly sins. The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (sometimes referred to as “wonder” or “awe”).

Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer: Though we may not always consciously realize it, the Lord’s Prayer is a series of petitions, or requests, that we make to God. This prayer was given to us by Jesus during his Sermon on the Mount (see Mt 6:5–13), which of course was also when he preached about the Beatitudes. These seven petitions, outlined in depth in the *Catechism* (2803–54), follow the initial greeting we make, “Our Father, who art in heaven.” After this greeting, we ask that God’s name be hallowed (honored), that his kingdom comes, that his will be done, that we be given our daily bread, that we be forgiven our trespasses, that we not be led into temptation, and that we be delivered from evil. Moving forward, we will see how each of the Beatitudes is a “blossoming” of these petitions.

Seven Deadly Sins (“Anti-Beatitudes”): The *Catechism* defines sin as “an offense against reason, truth, and right conscience; it is failure in genuine love for God and neighbor caused by a perverse attachment to certain goods. It wounds the nature of man and injures human solidarity” (CCC 1849). Though there are many different sorts of sins, the Church and her tradition classifies them in a list of seven “capital” or “deadly” sins. Each transgression we commit can be traced back to pride, avarice (greed), envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth (see CCC 1866). For our purposes, in showing them as a contrast to the Beatitudes, we may refer to them as the “anti-beatitudes.”

Note: As you read through the explanations and study the chart, remember that we are drawing all these things back to the Beatitudes, not necessarily drawing parallels between the “Subjects” themselves. While the Christian tradition does have a history of showing the interconnectedness of these aspects of the spiritual life, our work is focused on their relationship to the Beatitudes. Additionally, all explanations are kept brief to simply graze the surface of this rich theology. For any reader who wishes to go deeper, see the bibliography for resources that can provide more detail.

SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP QUIZ

After reading the School of Discipleship alone or with the group, gather to answer the questions in this short quiz that will help you understand the Beatitudes and how they flow through other areas of the spiritual life.

BEATITUDE PROFILE VIDEO

After your group discussion, each lesson contains a short video showing the Beatitudes being lived out by ordinary people. These profiles will inspire you to reflect upon your own life and help you think of ways to welcome the promises Christ made in his Sermon on the Mount.

LIVING IT OUT

This section provides a brief period to pray, discern, and write down the specific ways you can live out the Beatitudes.

MOUNT TO MISSION

Each lesson contains a short summary looking back at the teachings and takeaways and explores ways we can take what we have learned on the Mount and live-out our new mission.

WORDS OF WISDOM

Spread throughout each lesson are various quotations and excerpts to help you understand the Beatitudes. These include:

God's Word: Scripture passages from the key moments of each session.

From the Catechism: Supporting passages from the Catechism of the Catholic Church.

Wisdom of the Saints: Quotes from these holy men and women of the Church.

The Popes Teach: Helpful insights and inspirational messages from encyclicals, homilies, and books written by the popes throughout the ages.

GROUP STUDY SESSION PLAN

BEFORE THE SESSION

- Review your **Living It Out** section from the prior lesson to consider the ways you incorporated the Beatitudes into your everyday life (will not apply to Lesson 1).
- Review the optional **Lesson Readings** section.
- Read the **Lesson Introduction**.

SESSION

- **Opening Prayer** (1 minute)
- **Video Lesson**—hosted by Fr. Jeffrey Kirby (10–15 minutes)
- **Small Group Discussion** (20 minutes)
- **School of Discipleship**—read the short write-up and take the quiz (10 minutes)
- **Beatitude Profile Video** (10–15 minutes)
- **Living It Out** (5 minutes)
- **Mount to Mission** (3 minutes)
- **Closing Prayer** (1 minute)

MY PERSONAL CHECKLIST

At the beginning of the first group session of *Kingdom of Happiness*, you'll have the opportunity to review "My Personal Checklist: Before the Study" (p. 12), which is a list of some personal benefits that we hope you will receive through this experience.

At the end of the last lesson, you'll have the opportunity to review "My Personal Checklist: After the Study" (p. 92) so you can reflect on the areas in which you have grown personally through the study.

MY PERSONAL CHECKLIST

Before the Study

Here are some personal benefits you can receive through the time and focus you invest in *Kingdom of Happiness*. Check all those you hope to receive. At the end of the study, you'll have a chance to review the list again to reflect on the areas in which you've grown.

This checklist is for you only; it will not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.

- I want to better understand how the Beatitudes can affect my everyday life.
- I want to see examples of the Beatitudes being lived out and see their promises being fulfilled.
- I'd like to examine whether or not I am truly happy.
- I yearn to discover a way to leave behind the ways of the world, which so often wear me down.
- I'm searching for ways to become poor in spirit and what that truly means.
- I want to understand how suffering can lead to true happiness.
- I want to understand the true nature of freedom and how it pertains to my happiness.
- I'd like to see how being meek is more than just being gentle and humble.
- I'm searching for ways to become meek.
- I want to become more merciful.
- I want to understand how mercy and justice work together and are not opposed to one another.
- I'd like to learn how to become a peacemaker.
- I want to understand how peace doesn't just mean the absence of conflict.
- I want to understand what it means to hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- I want to pause and examine what it is I am hungering for.
- I want to discover why being pure in heart is not just overcoming lustful desires.
- I want to learn how to better deal with persecution.
- I want to understand why those who stand with Christ are so often persecuted and made to suffer.
- I want to see how the Beatitudes are connected to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the seven Christian virtues, and the seven petitions of the Our Father.
- I'd like to know what the anti-beatitudes are so I can recognize them in my own life and discover how they destroy my chance at happiness.
- I'd like to discover ways I can bring happiness to others.
- I want to become a more active member of my parish and help build the kingdom of God.

An Introduction to
KINGDOM OF HAPPINESS

If you're finding that life lacks meaning or purpose and it seems that you're always in some form of anguish or anxiety, there is hope—*happiness is possible*. It's something that every human being desires. Our whole selves, body and soul, are wired for happiness. Yes, God created us to be happy; it may not be consistent with the kind of happiness the world promises and values, but he does want us to be happy. This should be good news. No one hopes to be miserable, melancholic, confused, or lost. We all want to be happy and, preferably, happy with other people.

But before we go any further, we should make sure we know what happiness is. Perhaps the best way to do that is to say what happiness is *not*. Happiness is not getting what we want or having everything exactly as we desire, nor is it just some type of euphoria or emotional high. It's not found in the raw consumption of passing pleasures or the aggressive assertion of self-interests. While these might be enjoyable at times and give some security, they never last and always leave us wanting more.

The concept of freedom has been grossly misunderstood in recent times and this has contributed to a muddled and confused definition of happiness. Many of us think freedom means we can have exactly what we want at any given time and that we have a "right" to pursue every passion, urge, or feeling that washes over us.

Contrary to cultural currents and the sentiments of many, these understandings do not truthfully or holistically define freedom. Rather than a license to do whatever we please, true freedom comes when our life is ordered toward friendship with God. When we choose goodness, freedom flows within our soul like blood through our heart.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says, "Freedom is the power, rooted in reason and will, to act or not to act, to do this or that, and so to perform deliberate actions on one's own responsibility. By free will one shapes one's own life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth in goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude" (CCC 1731).

So, at its core, freedom is the power to choose between two things, but our freedom is strengthened when we do what is right, when we choose goodness in the midst of wickedness, truth in a world of error, and real beauty in a culture of ugliness.

St. Paul wrote, "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1). Paul is telling us that we don't have to be slaves in the kingdom of men; we have the freedom to find a new kingdom where true happiness reigns.

So let's return to our definition of happiness. Biblically speaking, happiness is receiving, accepting, and seeking to live in a state of beatitude, a condition of being blessed. Some might not know that this is literally what the word *beatitude* means—"blessed." Happiness is the satisfaction that comes from this beatitude and the awareness of this blessing and its providence, power, and purpose in our lives.

While there are numerous examples of a blessing being given in Sacred Scripture, from Shem being blessed by Noah, Abraham blessing Isaac, Israel's blessing of Judah, and so on, all human blessings are an expression of the singular blessing given by God to humanity. This blessing began at the creation of the heavens and the earth, but it spans salvation history and culminates in Jesus Christ, who is *the* Beatitude—*the* Blessing—and therefore *the* Happiness of God.

The Lord's life was not easy, nor comfortable, but he persevered in his happiness because his actions were always ordered toward the good, toward friendship with God. Jesus did not promise the same kind of happiness the world claims to give us; in fact, he told us that we, too, would have to carry our cross (see Mt 16:24). But if we carry this cross with sacrificial joy, as he did, we will share in the richness of his happiness.

The good news is that Jesus wants to help us carry our cross so that we can continue to choose to be happy. We can receive his supernatural assistance through the Church and her sacraments, but we can also ensure that we are walking alongside him if we strive to be like him. One of the chief ways we can do this is by living out the Beatitudes, which he taught us in his Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1–12). These lessons of living in a state of being blessed may seem paradoxical at first glance, but they serve as markers, or signposts, that show us the way to the kingdom of happiness.

This program will be an exploration of these Beatitudes so that we can see how they validate, sustain, and nurture our desire for happiness. We'll show them being lived out in Scripture and in everyday life, as well as examine their fascinating connections to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the virtues of the Christian tradition, the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and the deadly sins (which for our purposes we may call the "anti-beatitudes").

We read in the Acts of the Apostles that Christ and his gospel turned the world upside down (17:6–7). It might be more accurate to say he turned it right-side up. But either way we say it, it's clear that Jesus wants us to oppose the world and all its lies, just as he did. The most direct way to seeing through these lies and discovering the truth, the way we can turn our own worlds right-side up and turn our unhappiness to joy, is to live out the Beatitudes.

Yet living them must be a conscious choice, and that choice is yours. Will you continue to live as a subject of the world, or will you choose a new way of life and find your way to the kingdom of happiness?

LESSON I

POOR IN SPIRIT

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

—Matthew 5:3



LESSON INTRODUCTION

Although God created us to be happy, the concept of happiness has been polluted in recent times. The world tells us our contentment will come from exercising our “freedom” so that we might pursue every pleasure or comfort offered to us. But in doing so, we surrender our freedom and become slaves to our passions.

Christ came and turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6–7). He showed us that only in dying to self and embracing our cross do we discover true joy. To help us do this, he stood upon a mount and gave us several marks of his interior life called the Beatitudes. These directives may seem paradoxical at first glance, but as we just noted, this is precisely how our Savior taught, with a reality that contradicts the world.

The first of these Beatitudes is becoming poor in spirit. While this does, to a degree, involve being materially poor, it is more a reflection of our interior life. At its core, having poverty of spirit begins with our acknowledgment that we need God. The seed of this realization will bring about the blossoming of a holy exterior life so that we can begin to practice habits of detachment and temperance.

LESSON READINGS

Reading these before each lesson is optional, but can help you better understand and prepare for the lessons.

- An Introduction to Kingdom of Happiness (page 13 of your Study Guide)
- Matthew 5–7
- Luke 21:1–4
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1716–29, 2544–47

OPENING PRAYER

Christ taught us the Beatitudes in his Sermon on the Mount. This was also when he taught us how to pray. Begin each session by praying the Our Father.

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

VIDEO LESSON: POOR IN SPIRIT

It is now time to embark on the video lesson, hosted by Fr. Jeffrey Kirby. Key highlights are provided below with room to take notes for assisting with group discussion.

† God created us to be happy, but the world's lies have obscured the true meaning of happiness.

† Happiness often comes through accepting our trials and hardships rather than in pursuing comforts and pleasures.

† Christ came to turn the world upside down. He gave us the Beatitudes as a radical new way of living and finding happiness.

† Being poor in spirit does involve a detachment from material goods, but it begins with an acknowledgment of our necessity for God.

† Philippians 2:5–8 is known as the “kenosis hymn.” The word *kenosis* comes from the Greek *ekenosen*, which means “he emptied himself.” This passage demonstrates the Lord’s poverty of spirit.

† We can display a poverty of spirit in many ordinary ways.

Wisdom of the Saints

The rich of this world are of all people the most miserable because the more they possess, the more they desire to possess. They never succeed in obtaining all they desire. So they are far poorer than those who have just enough to get by, and seek God alone. Because the saints possess God, nothing is lacking to them. To the worldly rich, who are deprived of God, all things are lacking, because they lack peace.

—St. Alphonsus Liguori,
Sermon on the Unhappy Life of Sinners, 3

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Review these questions and discuss them with your group. Answers and discussion prompts can be found in the Supplemental Material on page 94.

1. How does the world define happiness, and how is it different from what the Beatitudes teach us?

2. How has the concept of freedom been misunderstood and abused, and how has this affected the happiness of those who live in our contemporary culture? How do we become truly free?

3. What does it mean to you when you hear Christ turned the world “upside down”?
How are the Beatitudes a perfect example of this?

4. What is at the root of being poor in spirit? How is it more than just being detached from material goods?

5. Why do you think the Church is booming in Africa? What can we in the West learn from their example?

6. What are some examples of how people in today’s culture do not live poor in spirit? What are some simple and ordinary ways you can combat the culture and live poor in spirit?

From the Catechism

The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven.

—CCC 2544

SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP

Read your “School of Discipleship” silently or with the group and then answer the questions in your “School of Discipleship Quiz.”

As we grow in spiritual poverty, the Holy Spirit bestows on us the gift of **fear of the Lord**, sometimes called “awe” or “wonder.” A person with wonder and awe knows that God is the perfection of all we desire. We can see how this goes hand in hand with a poverty of spirit since such a state helps us acknowledge our need for God (acknowledging our need for him leads to an “awe” of him).

Once we receive this gift, the virtue of **temperance** is perfected in our soul, which is properly using the created things of the world according to the purpose for which they have been given. It is knowing how to put “first things first”; namely, putting God first and putting our own wants and desires second. If we keep a poverty of spirit and if we fear the Lord, we will refrain from wanting and asking for too much, because we will know we should only want whatever God sends us, and no more.

This beatitude, gift, and virtue help us to better understand the petition in the Lord’s Prayer **“hallowed be thy name”** since in this utterance we acknowledge God’s majesty and our lowliness before him. The blossoming of this petition leads us to the promise of this beatitude, which is to inherit the kingdom of heaven. If we honor God and his name, we will become his adopted sons and daughters and have a share in his inheritance.

Lastly, the path that begins from this beatitude and crosses through these other aspects of the spiritual life helps us overcome the capital sin of **pride**. It should be clear how an inflated sense of self keeps us from being poor in spirit, as well as from fearing the Lord and keeping his name “hallowed.” Pride is a rebellion against God in order to serve ourselves, and in doing so, we lack temperance because we have made the decision to put ourselves first.

As the promise of the poor in spirit is the kingdom of heaven, so the punishment of the anti-beatitude is this small, suffocating world full of loneliness and emptiness.



| BEATITUDE | GIFT OF THE SPIRIT | CORRESPONDING VIRTUE | PETITION OF THE LORD’S PRAYER | CAPITAL SIN/ ANTI-BEATITUDE |
|--|--------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven</i> | Fear of the Lord | Temperance | Hallowed be thy name | Pride |

SCHOOL OF DISCIPLESHIP QUIZ

Answers and discussion prompts can be found in the Supplemental Material on page 96.

1. How does fear of the Lord differ from just being afraid of God and his judgment?

2. How does temperance help us put God before our own wants and needs?

3. How does being poor in spirit help you say, “Hallowed be thy name”?

4. In what ways does being poor in spirit open up the world to you? How does pride shrink your world?

BEATITUDE PROFILE VIDEO: THE MAN WITH A FORTUNE

After breaking from your group discussion, return to watch this week’s Beatitude Profile.

LIVING IT OUT

Spend 3–5 minutes privately discerning ways that God might be calling you to live with a poverty of spirit. Take notes on the suggestions below or add your own.

† Find a daily comfort that you enjoy and give it up for a period of time, offering it up to Jesus.

† Turn to God with something that you have been struggling with and acknowledge you cannot overcome it without him.

† Find a local charity that helps the poor and volunteer your time and talents there.

The Popes Teach

The poor in spirit is the Christian who doesn't rely on oneself, on material riches, who doesn't insist on their own opinions, but listens with respect and willingly defers to others' decisions. If in our community there were more (people who are) poor in spirit, there would be less divisions, conflicts and polemics!

—Pope Francis, *Sunday Angelus Address January 29, 2017*

MOUNT TO MISSION

Not all of us are called to leave everything behind and become a missionary in a third-world country. But we are all called to live with a poverty of spirit. Only then will the kingdom of heaven be ours.

We have to ask ourselves if we truly rely on God in all things. Do we realize that he is the source of our life, our blessings, and our salvation? Only if we foster an awe of his power and truly submit to his will can we become poor in spirit. Only then will we empty ourselves out for him and for our neighbor, leaving behind all our wants, comforts, and possessions. This is the path to becoming poor in spirit but rich in happiness.

Since this beatitude begins with humility, pride is the anti-beatitude of being poor in spirit. Just as pride is the source of all sin, humility is the source of virtue. Therefore, living poor in spirit is the first step in living out the Beatitudes. Only if you empty yourself first can you go on to walk with Christ and allow him to form your heart to all the other beatitudes. With this in mind, let's continue our journey toward the kingdom.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close out the session with this prayer, asking God to help you live out this beatitude.

Heavenly Father,

I want to be happy. Keep me from misery and the lies of this world.

As so many things promise happiness, I turn and surrender to you.

I am poor in spirit and desperately need you.

Come to me as I wait, empty and open to your grace.

Nothing can fill me with happiness except you and your blessings.

Bring me into your kingdom! Bless me with happiness!

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

God's Word

Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return; the LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.

—Job 1:21