



SESSION 1 of 4

The Beatitudes

MEETING AIM

To explore the statements Jesus makes at the start of the Sermon on the Mount.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:1-12

BACKGROUND

The Beatitudes appear in Matthew and Luke's Gospels but more fully in Matthew, where we'll be working from for this session. In both cases they appear fairly early on in Jesus' ministry. We have just seen Jesus being tempted in Matthew 4 and then come back to civilisation, where he begins to preach. The first disciples are called, Jesus heals the sick and the buzz about him begins. At the beginning of Matthew 5 we see Jesus escaping the crowds for the mountainside. His disciples come to him and he teaches them, beginning with what we now refer to as the Beatitudes.

5 CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass around a simple object. When a child has the object they can share their response to the question. Sometimes it's helpful to have a sand timer so you have time for each person to share if they want to. If anyone doesn't want to say anything they can just pass the object on. Ask the children to share something they were told that didn't make sense at the time.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: paper cups; a stopwatch
Spread paper cups all over the floor, with half facing down and half facing up. Divide the group into two teams and have one team try to get all the cups facing up and the other try to get all the cups facing down. Find out which team has been most successful after one minute.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: A3 card; a marker pen; a glue stick
Before the session, make some cards to accompany the storytelling. Write 'Blessed

are the poor in spirit' on one piece of card and 'Be as rich and successful as possible' on another (both landscape). Take the 'Blessed be' card and fold it in half, long edge to long edge, with the words inside. Glue the top half to a blank piece of card, matching up the top corners of the long edge. Turn the blank card around 180 degrees so that the 'blessed be' card is now at the bottom, and keep it folded so that the words are inside.

Now take the 'be as rich' card and glue it on top, so that the top part is glued to the top of the blank card and the bottom part is glued to the back of the 'blessed be' card. Now fold the 'blessed be' card open so that the 'be as rich' card is hidden. Do the same with the other Beatitudes (as detailed below).

Start the activity by talking about where we have got to in the account of Jesus' life. He has been tempted, started to preach, chosen disciples, attracted the crowds and now he's on a mountainside talking to his disciples. Talk about what 'blessed' means. It's the idea of being alongside God and experiencing his goodness.

Talk about the world's message focusing on being as rich and successful as possible, then discuss how Jesus is being counter-cultural. Say that recognising we are poor in spirit – that we don't have all the answers – is the better way. As you talk about Jesus' words (and extend into the second half of the verse), turn the card 180 degrees and fold the flaps down to show his words. This gives the impression of Jesus turning the world's ideas upside down.

Talk about as many of the beatitude ideas listed below as you have time for:

Blessed are those who mourn / You're good just as you are

Exploring how Jesus talks about mourning our loss of perfection

Blessed are the meek / Do everything you can to succeed

Exploring how we use the power we have

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness / Do whatever feels good

Exploring the right way to live

Blessed are the merciful / Make sure you've got your own back

Exploring how focused we are on revenge and justice

Blessed are the pure in heart / Do whatever seems fun

Exploring the things we do

Blessed are the peacemakers / Pick a side

Exploring our confrontational culture (especially the media)

Blessed are those who are persecuted / Do everything you can to stay under the radar

Exploring whether we are willing to live differently

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Why do you think Jesus' ideas are so different from the ideas of the world we live in?
- Which of the world's ideas are hardest to walk away from?
- What do you reckon people think about Jesus' ideas if they don't follow him?
- Can you think of any examples from your life this week that tie into any of the ideas we've talked about today?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: card cut into A6-sized pieces, glue sticks, felt-tip pens

Show the children how to make upside-down cards just like the ones you used in the story part, although a bit smaller. They can think about which idea struck them most and then reproduce it on their own card and decorate it however they wish. The card can be used as a daily reminder of the upside-down nature of Jesus' teaching.

5 PRAYER

Ask the group to find a comfortable position and close their eyes. Go back to the ideas from this week's session and start by making one of the world's statements. Ask the group to imagine how this idea plays out in everyday life.

Now read out Jesus' words on the same subject. Ask the group to imagine how Jesus would say those words to them personally. Leave a gap for them to imagine what else Jesus would say about this to them personally. Repeat with the other statements you used.

JENNY CHEUNG

is a mum, church planter and choir nut! She pioneers The Voice Project Scotland: a missional expression inviting children and their families to find their voices and enter into community to sing.

For the rest of this month's sessions go to youthandchildrens.work/together.



SESSION 2 of 4

Salt and light

MEETING AIM

To explore how following Jesus makes us different.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:13-16

BACKGROUND

Jesus has spoken to his disciples about living in a way that's radically different to the world's in the Beatitudes. He goes on to paint some pictures of how his followers' lives act as salt and light to the world around them.

Salt was much more significant in the ancient world than it is today. In fact, we are encouraged to eat less of it today! Conversely, Roman soldiers received their wages in salt, Greeks believed that salt was somehow divine and the Jewish sacrificial laws included salt. Before the age of refrigeration, it was used to preserve food and prevent decay, so when Jesus told his disciples they were salt it would have been significant.

Light is an easier thing for us to connect with as a concept from our modern viewpoint, although our light sensitivity has perhaps been dulled somewhat by light pollution and our ability just to flick a switch and send the darkness packing. Maybe we don't have such a sense of darkness as the first disciples did.

5 CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass around a simple object. When a child has the object they can share their response to the question. Sometimes it's helpful to have a sand timer so you have time for each person to share if they want to. If anyone doesn't want to say anything they can just pass the object on. Ask the children to share what their favourite savoury snack is.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: salt and shake crisps; blindfolds

Ask for some volunteers who don't mind being blindfolded. Blindfold the volunteers and tell them you're going to give them

two crisps. Let them try one crisp without salt and one with it. Talk about which they prefer and why, then take off the blindfolds. Is it nicer being in the dark or the light?

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: A3 paper (or larger, depending on the number of children in each group); marker pens

Divide the children into small groups of four or five (or stay together if you have a smaller group). Give each group a big piece of paper and some marker pens. Ask them to write a list of what we use salt for. Then ask them to write a second list explaining why light is important.

Draw the group back together and talk through their lists. Read (or ask someone else to read) Matthew 5:13-16. Have them look at their lists a second time in groups, and circle or underline any ideas that might connect with them being salt and light as Jesus says they are. Gather together and share those ideas. Unless your group has particular knowledge of salt in ancient times, you might like to share some of the ideas from today's background notes with them to help develop further understanding.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Jesus used picture concepts that his followers would have understood at the time. Do salt and light still help us to think about the way we follow Jesus?
- If not, what would work better as metaphors?
- Do you think your friends and family would sense a saltiness or light in you as you live as a follower of Jesus? How are these things seen or experienced?
- What things might have to change if people are going to see that you're a follower of Jesus?
- Jesus says you are these things. Does that mean you don't have to try to be?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: flour, salt, water and bamboo skewers; tea lights (real or battery-operated); access to an oven (optional)

Before the session, make salt dough by combining one cup of salt, two cups of flour and three-quarters of a cup of water.

Give everyone a fist-sized piece of dough and show them how to push their thumbs into the top to make a simple pot. They can then mould their pot as they like,

but it needs to be big enough to contain a tea light once it's hardened. A bamboo skewer can be used to push holes though in a pattern, so that when the tea light is lit the light will spill out from the holes. The salt dough can be hardened in the oven at 150°C for 30 minutes or left to dry out for several days.

As you work, chat about what the children have discovered today and the practical outworkings of being salt and light in their lives. You might want to share examples from your own life.

5 PRAYER

You will need: salty snacks (small crackers or similar); tea lights (real or battery-operated); music and the means to play it

Create an atmosphere of calm by putting on some music and dimming the lights. Invite the children to reflect on being salt and light as they taste a salty cracker, then light a candle.

Pray, asking God to help them recognise the moments when they are being salt and light in the week to come.

JENNY CHEUNG

is a mum, church planter and choir nut! She pioneers The Voice Project Scotland: a missional expression inviting children and their families to find their voices and enter into community to sing.

For the rest of this month's sessions go to youthandchildrens.work/together.



SESSION 3 of 4

Giving

MEETING AIM

To explore the area of how and why we should give.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 6:1-4

BACKGROUND

This is our third session exploring what we call Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We might imagine that Jesus taught all this in a 'oner', as it's put together that way in the Bible.

However, it's more likely that Matthew carefully curated this selection of teachings to enable the early followers of Jesus to remember (and memorise) what Jesus had taught in a structured way.

In the last session we thought about salt and light. Jesus then goes on to talk about some of the 'big-ticket questions' – murder, adultery, divorce and revenge – before challenging the disciples to love their enemies and to give to the needy, as we'll explore today. It's worth noting that Jesus says *when* you give. It's not an optional activity to earn us extra points!

5 CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass around a simple object. When a child has the object they can share their response to the question. Sometimes it's helpful to have a sand timer so you have time for each person to share if they want to. If anyone doesn't want to say anything they can just pass the object on. Ask the children to share what it feels like to keep a good secret.

5 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: a variety of small objects; similar-sized small boxes; wrapping paper; sticky tape

Before the session, wrap up a selection of objects so that they all look the same. You could use individual cupcake boxes or empty matchboxes to ensure uniformity. The objects can be sweets, novelties or totally random things such as a ping-pong ball, a pebble or an odd cufflink. It doesn't really matter.

Give each child a box and ask them to swap it with someone else. Then ask them to swap again. Repeat several times before allowing the children to open their boxes and find their 'treasure'. Explain that in today's story Jesus tells the people to give in such a secret way that they almost don't know what they're giving.

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: a leader to act like a 'great' Christian

Before the session, ask a leader to prepare a short monologue about how amazing they are at being a Christian. They should talk about all the incredibly helpful and sacrificial things they've done. They should make it as ridiculously over the top as they can.

Invite your volunteer to deliver their speech. Then ask the children how they think God would feel about this person doing all this stuff. Ask them what they think of the person and the way they told the story.

Read (or ask someone to read) Matthew 6:1. Ask the group what they think about this person now.

Continue to read the rest of the passage up to verse 4. What does Jesus say we should do? How does he say we should do it? Who might a needy person be? As people suggest ideas, ask them to strike a pose that captures the sort of person they're describing.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Why did Jesus tell us not to make a big deal out of giving?
- How old do you think you have to be to start giving to people in need?
- How rich do you have to be before you start giving to people in need?
- Do you think Jesus asks all of us to give to those in need?
- How could you give as secretly as possible?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: small pieces of card (credit card size would be fine); pens

Give out the pieces of card and pens, then encourage the children to make 'challenge cards' for the week ahead. Talk about things they could do to give to those in need, such as:

- Take unwanted items to the charity shop
- Put some change in a charity pot
- Buy pairs of socks and give them to homeless people

- Put food in the food bank baskets at the supermarket
- Buy a homeless person a sandwich

They could come up with a range of ideas that would be appropriate for their own situation. Encourage them to choose an idea or two they think they could do this week and write these on a card.

Explain that in order to keep ourselves safe we need to ask an adult to help us with this. They can be in on our giving secret. Make sure you let parents and carers know what you're doing so they can support their children in this activity.

5 PRAYER

You will need: pictures of people in need; a world map or globe

Display some pictures of people in need. These could be local or international examples of need. Stick your world map up on a wall or display the globe. Let the children reflect on how they might give to the people in these pictures. Use the map or globe to explore what the children know about areas of need around the world, but be careful not to stereotype areas of the world as needy and be specific about the need in certain places. For example, people might be in immediate need because of natural disasters or war.

Pray and ask God to soften our hearts toward those in need so that we give naturally in the course of everyday life without even realising what we're doing.

JENNY CHEUNG

is a mum, church planter and choir nut! She pioneers The Voice Project Scotland: a missional expression inviting children and their families to find their voices and enter into community to sing.

For the rest of this month's sessions go to youthandchildrens.work/together.



SESSION 4 of 4

Worry

MEETING AIM

To explore worry, and to think about how following Jesus might help us not to worry.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 6:25-34

BACKGROUND

It's important to remember that those Jesus spent most time teaching were incredibly poor. They were very much at the bottom of the pile in an occupied nation in which people were taxed by the Romans and by their own religious system. When Jesus talks to the people about money it's not just a high-concept idea. These people were desperately short of it. Perhaps the people were looking for a Messiah who would overthrow the Romans and make them rich. What they got was a Messiah who said that there was more to life than money and that the people shouldn't worry about any of that stuff because they had a God who was watching over them. That is either incredibly unsettling or incredibly comforting!

5 CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle and pass around a simple object. When a child has the object they can share their response to the question. Sometimes it's helpful to have a sand timer so you have time for each person to share if they want to. If anyone doesn't want to say anything they can just pass the object on. Ask the children to share what they worry about.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: paper; pencils; felt-tip pens
Give out paper, pencils and felt-tip pens, then ask the children to draw a picture of one thing that is necessary for life.

Once everyone has finished, encourage the group to present the pictures they have drawn. Chat together about the ideas that are similar and anything the children have drawn that is different from the others. How 'necessary' are the ideas the children have come up with?

10 BIBLE STORY

You will need: pictures from 'Intro activity'
Stick up the pictures the children draw in 'Intro activity' so they can be seen by everyone. Ask the group how worried they would be if they didn't have these things. Remind the children of the topics you have been looking at for the last few weeks. Talk about the topsy-turvy nature of Jesus' teaching, who often says the opposite of what the world does. With that in mind, what do they think Jesus will say about worry?

Read the passage, and whenever you come across something we might worry about not having (food, drink, clothes and so on), ask the group to point out which of the pictures they drew would match up with that idea.

Reread the passage and ask the children to stop you whenever they hear you read a promise that Jesus makes about what the Father will do.

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Is it easy not to worry?
- Is it easy to trust God's promises?
- Does that mean we never have to bother to make wise decisions?
- How can we move from worrying to trusting?
- What could you decide to trust God with this week?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: coloured card; string; mini craft pegs; felt-tip pens

Jesus talks about food, drink and clothes in the passage. Ask the children to choose three pieces of card in different colours. On one they should write the word 'Do', on the second 'not' and on the third 'worry'.

Chat about the things the children might be worrying about in their lives. For some there will be real anxiety, depending on what is happening in their lives at this particular moment. Year 6 children might be worried about moving schools and some might have difficult home lives (separated parents or being a 'looked-after' child). Others might have had their lives disrupted by a change (such as a newborn sibling, moving to a new house or a best friend moving away), and still others might be affected by an illness or death in their family.

Encourage the children to write about or draw their worries on the back of the three cards. They don't have to be literal

depictions. They could just write or draw something that represents their worry.

Give each child a piece of string and three mini craft pegs. Show them how to hang the string up at home and peg their three cards onto it. Explore how they can pray about the things they have depicted on their cards when they see them hanging up.

5 PRAYER

You will need: cards from 'Creative response'

Ask the children to hold their three cards from 'Creative response'. Encourage them to talk to God internally about what they are worried about and how they feel. After a few minutes, ask them to imagine that Jesus is sitting beside them. What does he want to say or do about their worries?

It may be that the children will talk about some difficult things in this session. If so work with parents and carers to ensure that children are supported afterwards. It might be worth noting down some of the things the children are worried about (with their permission, of course) so you can pray for them. If necessary, make sure you follow your church's safeguarding policy.

JENNY CHEUNG

is a mum, church planter and choir nut! She pioneers The Voice Project Scotland: a missional expression inviting children and their families to find their voices and enter into community to sing.

For the rest of this month's sessions go to youthandchildrens.work/together.