**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 1 of 4

# 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

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

What we now call the Beatitudes appear in both Matthew and Luke’s Gospels – more fully in Matthew, and where we’ll be working from for this session. In both cases, they appear fairly early on in Jesus’ ministry. In Matthew 4, we’ve seen Jesus tempted 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 where his disciples come to him and he teaches them, beginning with what we would now refer to as the Beatitudes.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

As the children arrive, sit everyone down in a circle. Chat about anything the children have done this week. Share something that you have done this week too. Ask the children to share something that someone told them that didn’t make sense at the time.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** paper cups; stopwatch

Spread paper cups all over the floor, half facing down and half up. Divide the group into two teams and have one team try to get all the cups facing up and the other team try to get all the cups facing down. See which team is most successful after one minute.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** A3 paper; marker pen

Before the session, make the props to accompany the storytelling. Write ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’ on one side of a piece of paper and ‘Be as rich and successful as possible’ on the other side. Go on to do the same with the other Beatitudes listed below.

Start the activity by talking about where we are in Jesus’ life – he’s 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 being ‘Be as rich and successful as possible’, then you can talk about Jesus being countercultural and saying that actually recognising that you are poor in spirit – you 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), you turn the paper upside-down to show his words. It gives the idea of Jesus turning the world’s ideas upside down.

Talk about as many of the Beatitude ideas as you like and 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 ways to live

Blessed are the merciful / Make sure you get 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 media)

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

Exploring whether we are willing to live differently

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

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 think people think about Jesus’ ideas if they don’t follow him?
* Can you think of examples from your life this week that tie into any of the ideas we’ve talked about today?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**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 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.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

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 bit of 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.