**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 1 of 4

# Beatitudes

### MEETING AIM

To explore what Jesus’ teaching means for our life and faith.

### 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.

This is the first session in a series on exploring the Sermon on the Mount. In many ways it’s easy to read the Beatitudes as about being good people, but really when you take time to look at them and reflect on what Jesus is saying, they’re very radical! In a sense, Jesus is talking about those who are his people: laying out something of a manifesto. He’s not interested with those who are playing the system well and coming out on top; his heart is for the outliers on the margins. What a message of both hope and challenge this is to us, still today! Those who are broken and in need of a saviour are welcomed into his gang, already belonging without anything more that they need be. Those who are invested in winning in the ways of the world find challenge here, that maybe what they are chasing amounts to very little in the community of Christ. This session looks at exploring this radical message that Jesus preached 2,000 years ago, but still speaks to us today, with both words of comfort and challenge.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the young people to the session with any refreshments you have brought. You might want to incorporate ‘Intro activity’ as part of the welcome, otherwise use this time to settle in and catch up.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a large sheet of paper or whiteboard; marker pens

Ask the group to think of the people in the world that they would consider ‘winners’ at life. Write a list of these down.

Ask the group to think about what attributes these people have that have made them ‘winners’.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** printouts of the Bible passage; highlighter pens in different colours

Give everybody a copy of Matthew 5:1-12 and two colours of highlighter pens. Read through the passage together. Ask for a volunteer to read or prime a leader to read before the session. (Don’t force anyone to read if they don’t want to.)

As you read the passage, ask everyone to use one colour to highlight the characteristic a person might have, and the other to highlight what the consequences of these attributes will be.

Ask the group to think about and write down what those hearing Jesus’ words might usually think would be the consequence of having these characteristics.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Following on from ‘Bible exploration’, discuss these questions:

* What kind of people are being described by Jesus in this passage?
* Why are the consequences surprising?
* Why does Jesus want to bless these people?
* How do you think that they will be blessed?
* Why do you think this passage is so powerful to Christians?
* What does this passage say about who Jesus is?
* Do you relate to any of these attributes especially?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** examples of propaganda posters; large sheets of paper; art materials

Explain what a propaganda poster is: usually propaganda has been used to spread ideas (ie to propagate them), usually with a political agenda. Many famous ones in UK history are from the wars, where posters and art were created with particular messages, such as slogans to recruit members to the army, increase compliance with rationing or not sharing secrets that might be spread to spies (“Loose lips sink ships!”). A while ago the ‘Keep Calm and Carry On’ poster gained a lot of popularity after it was rediscovered.

At this stage, show the group some examples of propaganda posters. It would be really helpful to have a lot of examples. Show these on a laptop or tablet, or print them off to share around.

Chat about how what Jesus was saying in what we called the Beatitudes, at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount is quite a different way to influence people! He is trying to raise a different kind of community, that celebrates and protects the vulnerable, those who love deeply, and those who know that they need help.

Invite the group to make their own posters. Suggest that they take one of the lines in the Beatitudes – maybe the one that speaks to them most – and turn it into a poster. Would they want to use a slogan? What kind of image would they put on the poster? Provide materials that will help them, and again examples of posters would be really helpful. Maybe you are able to provide examples of typography, or stamps to help. If you have a laminator available, you could laminate the posters.

Give the group some good time to work on their posters. As they work, chat about what the young people have discovered today. If you’ve got space to display them where you meet, you could put them up.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** printouts of Matthew 5:1-12; scissors

Ask the group to read through the Bible passage again, in reflective silence. Then encourage them to pick one of the verses that they would like to use as an encouragement for prayer that week. Pass the scissors around and invite them to cut their verse out as a strip to take away and put somewhere that they’ll carry with them. They could put it in their purse, stick it in a homework planner or put it somewhere in their room.

After everyone has cut out their verse, pray together:

“Jesus, you bless those who live close to your heart. Sometimes following you is a scary road that takes us to the margins, but remind us that we find you there. Jesus, we give you the verses that you spoke those 2,000 years ago, and still speak to us today. Encourage us, when we need your blessing in the hard or lonely places, and remind us that you are there with us. Keep us humble and remind us that you are the treasure worth chasing. Amen.”

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