

Sanctified | Matthew 5:1-12

Who is the kingdom of God for?

“Blessed are the cracked, for they shall let in the light.”

-Groucho Marx

Lesson Overview

Who is the kingdom of God for? Is it reserved only for those who are “good” or is there something more to be discovered? This lesson introduces Jesus’s famous Sermon on the Mount, starting with the Beatitudes. Here Jesus reveals the unlikely groups of people that will enter into His kingdom.

The goal of this lesson is to show that entering God’s Kingdom is not primarily about following strict rules, but learning to become more dependent on God by following Jesus’s example. The Beatitudes are essential to understanding Jesus’s mission here on earth.

Lesson Objectives

What: The Kingdom of God is open to anyone who puts their faith and trust in Jesus. The Beatitudes guide us, not toward self-effort, but toward a greater dependence on God.

Why: Greater dependence on God leads to an abundant life and future in God’s Kingdom.

How: Christians grow in their dependence and faith in God by following the example of Jesus in the Beatitudes.

Primary Scripture

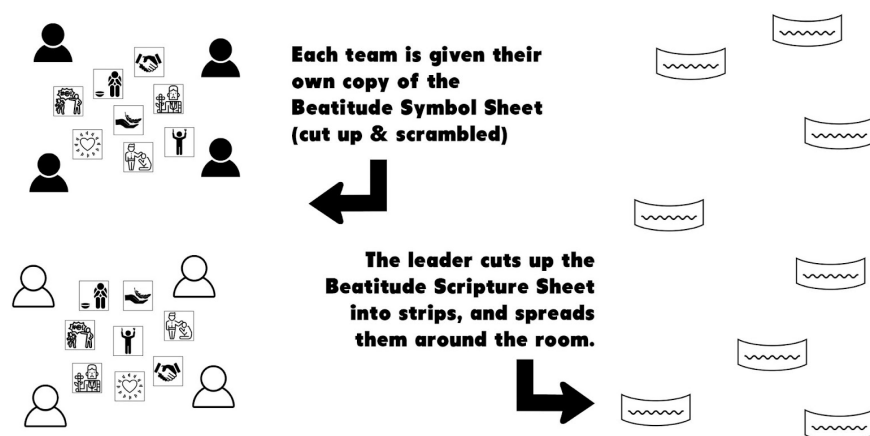
Matthew 5:1-12: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

The Game - Blessed Are The Puzzle Solvers (15 min)

- Overview:
 - # of Participants: **Any**
 - Where to Play: **Indoors**
 - Age of Participants: **Elementary / Middle / High School**
 - Materials: [Beatitude Symbol Sheet](#), [Beatitude Scripture Sheet](#)

This activity will serve as an introduction to this year's theme: *The Sermon on the Mount*. At the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus revealed who the kingdom of heaven is for through his teaching, famously known as *The Beatitudes*. These 8 statements describe the qualities of those who become followers of Jesus and the rewards they will receive. This first game will introduce your group to Jesus's teaching by having them solve a symbol puzzle for each verse of the Beatitudes.

Before your meeting begins, print and cut out one copy of the [Beatitude Scripture Sheet](#) for the entire group, and one copy of the [Beatitude Symbol Sheet](#) for each team of puzzlers (see below). As the leader, take the 8 slips of Beatitude scriptures and tape them around the room. For a twist, you can even hide them slightly (ex. On the ceiling, in a closet, or even on another leader, etc.). To start the game, divide your group into teams of 3 to 6 players. Each puzzling team should receive one set of 8 rectangular Beatitude symbols.



At the start of the game, explain to the group that each symbol in front of them represents a unique Beatitude that is scattered around the room. The goal of the game is to figure out what

each of the Beatitudes symbols in front of them represents, and then place their icons in the same order the Beatitudes appear in the Bible. To help teams decipher the symbols, one at a time, each team member is allowed to search the room for a Beatitude Scripture and its order. Once the Researcher has relayed their findings back to the group, another teammate can take their place to find a new Beatitude.

As the game progresses, teammates will continue to decipher each symbol and arrange them in order from first to last. When a team believes they have the correct order, they shout “BEATITUDE!” to signal to the leader to check their arrangement. The leader will then inform them *how many* symbols are correctly placed but *will not reveal which ones are right or wrong* (ex. “5 correct”). If the team’s symbols are out of order, simply remind them – “all who mourn will be comforted, so keep trying!” The first team to guess the correct order of the symbols wins, and are deemed the most blessed of the puzzle solvers!



The final correct order

-  **Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
-  **Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.**
-  **Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.**
-  **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.**
-  **Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.**
-  **Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**
-  **Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.**
-  **Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kinadom of heaven.**

The Breakdown (~40 mins)

- Overview:
 - # of Participants: **Any**
 - Where to Play: **Indoors**
 - Age of Participants: **Elementary / Middle / High School**
 - Materials: **Some way to watch a video (laptop, tv/projector, speaker, internet connection, etc.)**

Ask the following questions:

- **What was the word you shouted during the game when you thought you had all eight symbols in the right order? What do you think it means?**
 - *Beatitude*: A declaration of blessedness, derived from the Greek word μακάριος (makarios), meaning “blessed”.
- **Does anyone know what part of the Bible the Beatitudes are from?**
 - The Beatitudes are the first teachings Jesus gave as part of his famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5 through 7).
 - The Sermon on the Mount was Jesus’s first public ministry, and in a lot of ways is like a summary of His entire ministry.
 - Even though it was spoken over 2,000 years ago, it’s still shockingly relevant and meaningful today.

Say: This year, we will take a deep dive into the Sermon on the Mount, beginning with the Beatitudes. Though only eight short verses, the Beatitudes serve as a roadmap for the rest of Jesus’s teachings by answering the question, “*Who is the Kingdom of God For?*”. As we journey through each of them, you’ll discover that Jesus’s Kingdom is open to an unlikely and surprising group of people.

Ask:

- **Who in your life do you think the Kingdom of God is for?**
 - Most people might answer by naming those they see as good, moral, and religious.



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- If your group needs a little encouragement, try asking them if a famous person or celebrity is allowed into the kingdom. (ex. Abe Lincoln, Al Capone, etc.)

Say: A lot of you probably thought about *morally good* people, but let's watch a scene from *The Chosen* where Jesus delivers the Beatitudes. As you watch, think about your answer.

Watch the following video: *Jesus Gives the Beatitudes* from *The Chosen* (~4min)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5OnF3sg0cY>

While the video is playing, write the Beatitudes on a whiteboard, or be ready to display them on your TV/projector.

5 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, **2** and he began to teach them.

He said:

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

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. **12** Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:1-12



Ask:

- **What is your initial reaction to the video? Did your answer to who the Kingdom of God is for change?**
 - Group answers will vary, but hopefully the group is beginning to see that Jesus's answer in the Beatitudes is aimed not at those who are famous, moral, or religious, but quite the opposite.
 - Jesus is looking for people that are broken, lost, and hurting.
 - The doorway into God's kingdom is marked by humility and dependence on him.

Say: Before Jesus, it was commonly believed that entry into the Kingdom of God required being of Jewish birth and strictly following the Old Testament laws. At the time Jews were required to adhere to severe dietary restrictions, perform numerous purification rituals, and follow strict religious traditions. It was believed that a person's ability to diligently follow these rules and perform good deeds determined their entry into God's Kingdom. The Beatitudes, however, tell a different story.

Ask:

- **Look at the Beatitudes. What kinds of struggles, or needs in people's lives, is Jesus describing?**
 - **Those who are poor in spirit** - those who are in utter spiritual bankruptcy
 - **Those who mourn** - those who grieve over sin, suffering, and brokenness in the world
 - **Those who hunger and thirst** - those who long deeply for God's goodness
 - **Those who are persecuted** - those who suffer for the sake of God's Kingdom
- **What are some of the characteristics or qualities of those who are blessed?**
 - **Meek** - strength under control shown through gentleness and humility, *not* weakness
 - **Merciful** - a gift of kindness or compassion toward the undeserving
 - **Pure in heart** - to be sincere or authentic in your intentions toward God and others
 - **Peacemakers** - someone who actively seeks to resolve conflict. Pursuing peace and reconciliation



Say: The Beatitudes show us the kinds of people Jesus is looking for; those who recognize their need for Him, who grieve over sin, who long for His goodness, and who are willing to follow Him, even through hardship. Those who follow Jesus are humble in heart, pursue mercy and peace with others, and seek God with sincerity.

Ask:

- **Are you beginning to see yourself in the Beatitudes? Which one speaks to you?**
 - Encourage your group to open up about an area with which they are struggling.
 - As the leader, perhaps share an example from your own life.

Say: If you can see yourself in any of the Beatitudes (we all do from time to time), know that you belong to God's Kingdom! Jesus says that you are blessed and that you will receive a reward.

Ask

- **What are some of the rewards Jesus promises to those who are blessed?**
 - **The kingdom of heaven** - God rewards the faithful with his eternal kingdom
 - **Comforted** - God draws near in our distress and gives us hope
 - **Inherit the earth** - the meek become heirs to the fullness and riches of God's creation
 - **Filled** - God's righteousness provides complete satisfaction
 - **Shown mercy** - those who are merciful receive God's grace and mercy
 - **See God** - the pure in heart will behold God's glory
 - **Children of God** - those who pursue peace reflect God's family

Say: So who is the Kingdom of God for? It's for imperfect people who cannot get there on their own. For those who are spiritually poor, emotionally broken and in need of a Savior. The Beatitudes are more than a list of who qualifies for the Kingdom; they reveal the character of Jesus Himself. Jesus was poor in spirit, living in total dependence on God the Father. Jesus mourned over human suffering and death on this earth. But most of all, Jesus chose to hunger and thirst on the cross so that we may be called righteous before God. Jesus is the doorway into God's Kingdom.



Ask:

- **Ask yourself: How can I follow Jesus's example in the Beatitudes? Instead of trying harder to earn my way into God's Kingdom, how can I rely more fully on Jesus?**
 - Each person's answer will be different but try to lead them to see that the Beatitudes ultimately guide us to following the example of Jesus.

Closing Prayer

Now that everyone has had a chance to share how they see themselves in the Beatitudes, pray this closing prayer...

"God, thank you for showing us that your Kingdom is open to people like us - broken, hurting, and in need of you. Thank you for Jesus' words that remind us we are blessed, not because of what we do, but because of who you are. Help us depend on you more each day, and teach us to live with mercy, humility, and peace. Give us courage to follow your example, even when it's hard. We love you, LORD, and we pray this in your name. Amen."

Sanctified - Set apart as or declared holy

per [Oxford Languages](#)

