

THE BEATITUDES

Company & Seniors

Scripture Resource 2024/25

BBNI
THE NORTHERN IRELAND BOYS' BRIGADE



SESSION ONE

INTRO TO THE BEATITUDES

THE BIG IDEA

Introducing the power of Jesus' words

THE WORD

Matthew 5:1-12

INTRODUCTION

We have all heard some sayings that people use.

Ask the young people to share what they think the following sayings mean?

- Many hands make light work.
 - Strike while the iron is hot.
 - Honesty is the best policy.
 - The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.
 - Don't judge a book by its cover.
 - An apple a day keeps the doctor away.
 - Better late than never.
- Many of these sayings are borne out of experience and time.

Some of these sayings we know work. Some we just use as the occasion suits, although using the wrong one at the wrong time could be disastrous. When it comes to The Beatitudes we have a series of sayings from Jesus, but they carry a completely different meaning. They are far more than just things to help us interpret life or help us make a decision. They are the bedrock of how we live out the hope we have in Jesus.

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 

Activity 

Line up

THE TALK

The Beatitudes are at the beginning of the 'Sermon on the Mount'. The 'Sermon on the Mount' is probably Jesus' most well-known teaching. This sermon, which was shared 2,000 years ago has implications that are still shockingly relevant and meaningful today.

The sermon looks at humility, forgiveness, and generous care for our neighbours. Jesus encourages people to choose God's way of love, which will eventually renew all of creation. The 'Sermon on the Mount' begins with The Beatitudes and they emphasise the importance of its contents as being very central to Christian living. The Beatitudes emphasise that the contents of the 'Sermon on the Mount' are central to Christian living.' They reveal to us the ethical standards of the Kingdom of God. But Jesus doesn't just give us these random set of sayings that are hard to relate to and sometimes even understand. What we see is these Beatitudes being lived out in Jesus' own life and ministry.

So, for instance, if you are not sure what Jesus means by "blessed are those who mourn," look at the examples in Jesus' own life and ministry where He cries out with sadness and anguish to God. This will help us see that mourning is not just about bereavement, but a whole attitude of lamentation and crying out to God when we see and experience the injustices and sorrows of the world. Even though we will deal with them separately, the Beatitudes are a totality. We should not use them as a pick and mix, we cannot choose between them:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.(v3)

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.(v4)

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.(v5)

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.(v6)

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (v7)

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (v8)

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. (v9)

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.(v10)

Some of the Beatitudes may suit our personality better than others. Some of us may find that we are naturally people who thirst for justice or who are merciful to others. But likewise, we may also conclude that being pure in heart or meek do not come naturally to us. Whatever our natural personality, the Beatitudes are for all of us, and they need to be understood as a whole, and applied equally to our lives. They begin with poverty of spirit, because this Beatitude is about acknowledging our need of God and the essential poverty and shortsighted limitations of our own desires. From this, the other beatitudes flow, and to some sort of persecution and misunderstanding is where all the Beatitudes lead. Certainly, the Beatitudes challenge all Christians when we understand their full meaning.

APPLICATION

As you prepare for the rest of the series, you might want to get the young people to pray through each of the Beatitudes. You could print out the short prayer under each Beatitude and use it in your Bible Study time. The following prayers were written by an author unknown.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit...” (v3)

Heavenly Father, I want the humility not to be impressed with myself and my accomplishments. Increase in me (John 3v30). More of You, God, none of me. I am overwhelmed with the sense of my spiritual need. I recognise my true spiritual condition of pride and self-sufficiency, and I am broken over my need to cast myself upon Your mercy.

“Blessed are those who mourn...” (v4)

God, break my heart with what breaks Your heart. Let me embrace the true grief of the Man of sorrows. I die to unholy grief (self-pity). Let me receive Your comfort in my losses (Isaiah 61v2). Wipe away my tears in Your tender mercy.

“Blessed are the meek...” (v5)

My Lord Jesus was meek, lowly, and gentle of heart (not to be confused with weakness). He knew He had all the infinite resources of His Father at His command. Lord, rein me in so that I will be gentle in Your strength. I accept all Your dealings with me as good. Replace my self-assertiveness and demanding my rights with Your long-suffering and humility.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...” (v6)

I intensely long for more of You with unquenchable thirst. My spirit and my soul will be completely satisfied only in the living water of Your presence. I won't try to satisfy my soul's appetite at the world's table. I'll taste and see that

You are good. I ardently desire You as much as I need food to sustain life (Psalm 36v8-9, Psalm 42v1-2).

“Blessed are the merciful...” (v7)

Father of mercies, help me open my heart to others. Through me, show them the mercy they need, setting off a chain reaction of grace. I choose to forgive in the measure as I have been forgiven, because Jesus lives in me with His infinite forgiveness.

“Blessed are the pure in heart...” (v8)

Wash me with Your holiness, holy God. Burn out the impurities with Your refining fire. I present my hands and my heart for sweet daily cleansing from the pollution and guilt of sin (Ps. 24v3-4). Separate the precious from the things in this world that are worthless, insincere, and unholy (Phil. 1v9).

“Blessed are the peacemakers...” (v9)

Prince of peace, I renounce a spirit of jealousy. I am content with who I am before You. I receive Your peace in my heart. I choose to be at peace with everybody in all circumstances. As much as I can, I will make peace where there is discord. As a peacemaker, I will sow in peace and reap a harvest of righteousness (James 3v13-18). I am an ambassador of reconciliation.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake...” (v10)

Righteous One, help me to suffer for the right reason, for Your sake, for God-likeness and commitment to You, not for self-pity or petty sensitivity. I will stand strong when opposed for pursuing You, and I will fall deeper into Your arms. I am a citizen of another kingdom, and I bow only to Your rightful claims on my life.

? QUESTIONS

Print out a copy of the prayer in the application section. Divide into groups and discuss what each of the verses would mean to the young people.

Question examples:

V4 – What would break God’s heart?

V6 – What does it mean to taste and see that God is good?

V9 – What does it mean to be a peacemaker?

SONG

A Time of Reflection

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kkjmXnlWow> The Beatitudes, Hillsong

<https://youtu.be/wEFHy-NSW8I?si=DnzbyRhsOU4UHMAE> This is the Kingdom, Pat Barrett

LINE UP

Try and get the young people to complete a task together or to arrange themselves into an order such as: line up in the order of your birth months, or tallest to smallest. Seems easy right? Easy is it if they are not allowed to talk out loud? Try a few different tasks with them and make them a little harder each time. Finally, let them do it but being allowed to speak, see how much easier it is? Words are a powerful thing and they get people’s attention, without words we aren’t always able to get across what we want to say. Jesus had a great way of speaking to people and they listened. Our words, like Jesus’ words can also have a huge impact.

SESSION TWO

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

THE BIG IDEA

There are many ways in which we can be poor. To be “poor in spirit” means to know that we are spiritually bankrupt/helpless and need the salvation only God can provide. Those who are “poor in spirit” will be truly happy because they are part of God’s Kingdom.

THE WORD

Luke 18v9-14

INTRODUCTION

Ask the young people to suggest people who could be considered poor.

Lead a brief discussion about the different types of poverty – e.g. material poverty (lack of possessions), social poverty (lack of friends), educational poverty (lack of opportunity to get a good education), health poverty (lack of physical or mental health), technological poverty (lack of access to modern technology), moral poverty (not living according to God’s word), spiritual poverty (not right with God because not trusting in His plan of salvation), and so on.

Ask the young people what they think Jesus meant when He talked about people who are “poor in spirit”.

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 🎵

Game 🎲

What is the value?

Drama 🏠

The Pharisee and the tax collector

THE TALK

Our society says that the achievers, the wealthy, the popular, the gifted, the assertive, the beautiful, and so on, are truly happy. But, Jesus turns that whole philosophy upside down by saying that deep inner joy belongs to the “poor in spirit”.

So, it’s vitally important that we understand what Jesus is saying in this Beatitude. First of all we need to realise that “poor in spirit” doesn’t mean material poverty. The poverty Jesus is referring to is in our spirit, not our pocket.

The Beatitudes show us the characteristics of those who belong to God’s kingdom, and poverty of spirit is the foundation upon which all the other characteristics are built.

One of the clearest illustrations of this type of spiritual poverty is found in the parable Jesus

told about the Pharisee and the tax collector praying in the Temple.

The Pharisee demonstrated that he wasn’t poor in spirit by praying, “God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.” (v11 - 12).

On the other hand, the tax collector couldn’t even bring himself to look up to heaven, and prayed, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner!” (v13)

The tax collector’s poverty of spirit resulted in him receiving the greatest blessing that could ever be bestowed on anyone. Jesus said that the tax collector “went down to his house justified” (v14). Or, to use the words of the Beatitude that we’re studying today, the tax collector entered the kingdom of heaven.

APPLICATION

God doesn’t promise salvation to those who think they deserve it because of who they are, or who think they have earned it because of what they have done (like the Pharisee did in Jesus’ parable), but to those who acknowledge that they’re spiritually bankrupt because they’re sinners.

When we accept we’re a sinner, we then ask God to be merciful to us. In other words, we humbly ask God to forgive all our sins, and we believe that Jesus has done everything necessary to make us right with God through His perfect life of obedience to God’s law, His death on the cross to pay the price for our sin, and His victorious resurrection from the tomb.

This is the first Beatitude because Jesus recognised that the biggest obstacle to us enjoying life in God’s kingdom is our pride – we don’t like to admit that we are sinners.

The blessing given to the “poor in spirit” couldn’t be clearer or greater. Jesus said that “theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. The way Jesus said this in the original Greek language emphasises that the kingdom of heaven is only promised to those who are “poor in spirit”.

It’s also important to notice that Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”. The promise of being a citizen of the “kingdom of heaven” is in the present tense. So, we become a citizen of God’s kingdom the moment we trust Jesus to be our Lord and Saviour. This means that it’s something to be possessed, and enjoyed, right now and not just in the future.

? QUESTIONS

1. What does the phrase “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) mean?

To know that we are spiritually bankrupt / helpless and need the salvation only God can provide.

2. What’s the opposite of being “poor in spirit”?

Being confident that we’re right with God by our own efforts / think that we don’t need the salvation God provides.

3. When we realise that we are spiritually bankrupt / helpless, what should we do?

Ask God to forgive our sin, believing that Jesus has done everything that’s needed for our sin to be forgiven.

4. When we do this, what does Jesus promise us?

We immediately become a member of God’s family, and we can be sure that we will live with God forever in the perfect place that Jesus is preparing for all who trust in Him.

♪ SONG

A Time of Reflection

<https://youtu.be/hfYN0JgrE3Q?si=oukA7cRz76iYtply> Holy Spirit. Shane and Shane

SESSION TWO

ACTIVITIES



WHAT IS THE VALUE?

1. Give each young person one set of coloured squares (can be printed from page 9).
2. Each set should have the same number of squares and the same number of each colour.
3. Announce that each square has a different point value but the young people will not know the points until the end of the game.
4. Ask the young people to begin exchanging their squares of paper according to what they think each is worth. Keep an eye on the young people who are not exchanging very much and listen to reasons why some colours are being exchanged and others are not.
5. After about three to five minutes, stop the exchanges. Give the values for each square of paper and ask the young people to add up their points. The person with the most points wins.
 - Black- 8 points
 - Red- 2 points
 - Green- 3 points
 - Yellow- 4 points
 - Orange- 10 points
 - Pink- 1 point
 - Purple- 6 points
 - Blue- 9 points
6. Ask: Why did some people not exchange a lot of colours? What are some of your reasons for exchanging certain colours? Make the following points:
 - Some people were content with what they already had so did not exchange.
 - Some people valued certain colours more than others.
 - Sometimes the values of items were not what we expected



SESSION TWO

THE PHARISEE AND THE TAX COLLECTOR



This script was written for BBNI by local Christian drama company, Play It By Ear. To find out about them or to book a drama workshop visit www.playitbyear.com

more

Actors are lined up at the back of the stage. At one end, there is Cedric, very smartly dressed in a suit and tie and looking very sophisticated. At the other end, there is Sid who looks very scruffy. In between, they are all dressed in their BB uniforms and will play the crowds who react to Cedric and Sid

Narrator 1: Jesus told a story to his disciples

Narrator 2: It was a parable about two men

Narrator 1: We imagine they were a bit like this

Narrator 2: Yes we think one of them could have been called Cedric

Cedric steps forward and looks very proud

Narrator 1: Now the people loved Cedric

People: We love you Cedric!

Narrator 2: They thought he was such a great guy

People: He's such a great guy!

Narrator 1: And that he had a really nice tie

People: He's got a really nice tie!

Narrator 2: You see, Cedric was a Pharisee and people really liked the Pharisees

People: Go Cedric!

Narrator 1: Now we think the other man could have been called Sid

Sid steps forward and wipes his nose on his sleeve

Narrator 2: But the people didn't love Sid

People: We don't love you Sid!

Narrator 1: In fact they thought he was disgusting

People: We think you're disgusting!

Narrator 2: And rude

People: And rude!

Narrator 1: and mean

People: And mean!

Narrator 2: You see Sid was a tax collector and people really didn't like tax collectors

People: Go away Sid!

Narrator 1: Cedric really liked doing things for the community

Narrator 2: Like giving to charity!

Someone steps forward with a bucket and says

Charity worker: Donations please, donations please!

Cedric takes out a wad of cash and speaks very loudly

Cedric: Here's 100

People: Wow!

Cedric: 200

People: No way!

Cedric: 300!

People: What a guy!

Narrator 1: But Sid wasn't quite so generous

Narrator 2: In fact he was well known for taking money rather than giving it out

Charity worker: Donations please, donations please!

Sid reaches into the bucket and takes out a note at a time

Sid: Actually, I think you owe me 100

People: Huh?

Sid: No wait, it was 200

People: What?!

Sid: Actually I'm pretty sure it was 300!

People: What a jerk!

Narrator 1: Now Cedric loved to talk using big, fancy words

Cedric speaks slowly, in a posh voice and looks very proud

Cedric: Intercessory

People: So true!

Cedric: Ecumenical

People: Amen!

Cedric: Sanctification!

People: Preach it brother!

Narrator 2: Whereas Sid was known for his more abrupt manner

Sid speaks rudely

Sid: Give. Me. My. Money!

People: Go away Sid!

Narrator 1: Cedric and Sid, two very different men

Narrator 2: But two men who one night found themselves praying in the temple at the same time

Narrator 1: Away from the prying eyes of all the townspeople

People exit leaving Cedric and Sid alone in a praying pose

Cedric: Father God, thank you that I am so brilliant! Amen!

Sid: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner!

Narrator 2: When Jesus had finished telling the story, he had this to say;

Narrator 1: I tell you, it was the tax collector, not the Pharisee who went home right with God. Those who exalt themselves, make themselves out to be more than who they are, will be humbled but those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Narrator 2: Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who know they need a Saviour, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.

SESSION THREE

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN



THE BIG IDEA

When we experience deep sorrow over our sins, God responds by comforting us with forgiveness and the hope of spending forever with Him.



THE WORD

Luke 7:36–50

▶ INTRODUCTION

Ask the group to make a list with you of things that make them sad. Allow for some flippancy – eg. Football results, etc. Steer the conversation towards more serious matters – eg. sickness, war, famine, homelessness, or death of someone close. Refer to something that is currently topical. Remember to be sensitive if discussing death, especially if bereavement has been a recent experience for someone in the group.

Talk about how the sadness we feel at the death of someone we love is so profound that there is a word that is most closely associated with that sadness – the word ‘mourn’. It means to grieve or feel intense sadness.

Explain that ‘mourn’ is a word that can be associated with any sadness that is heartfelt – eg. sadness over suffering in the world.

Explain that the suffering we witness and the sadness we feel at times is evidence that the world is broken. It has been broken by human beings saying ‘No’ to God’s rule. This is why there is greed, selfishness, etc. which leads people to do terrible things to others and even to creation itself. This is what is called ‘sin’.

It is right to mourn the sin of the world.

However, our own behaviour and attitudes contribute to the world’s brokenness too. Everyone has sinned (Romans 3:23).

When Jesus speaks here of those who mourn, it doesn’t necessarily mean those who grieve for someone who has died, but rather those who feel the deepest sorrow for their sins. He says there is

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 🎵

Activity ✂️

Sardines

blessing in this because this is how we experience the 'comfort' of God. The blessing doesn't come from the mourning but from how God responds to it – in total forgiveness which brings peace and joy which is a comfort that goes deeper than anything the earth could ever provide.

THE TALK

One example of someone who experienced this blessing is a woman who interrupted Jesus at a party, He was attending in the home of a very respectable religious man. This encounter is recorded in Luke 7:36-50. (If there are those in the group who are not as familiar with Scripture, freebibleimages.org is a helpful source for visuals which may assist in holding everyone's attention.)

Some points to draw from this story which illustrate this Beatitude:

This woman was an obvious sinner. She had a terrible reputation. We aren't told the nature of her sins, but we may conclude from the passage that she was very immoral.

She may well have heard of or even met Jesus before. In any case, she came to Him greatly distressed, kneeling before Him, her tears

wetting His feet which she then wiped with her hair before pouring expensive perfume over them.

Simon, the religious man, in whose home this happened was appalled and doubted that Jesus was even a prophet, because He let a woman like this behave in this way without calling her out or pushing her away.

In a short story, Jesus said that if two people have debts forgiven, one a large debt and the other a small debt, the one who has the larger debt cancelled will be the most grateful.

The point was that this woman who mourned her sins so profoundly received the greatest comfort from God in being forgiven, whereas Simon, who felt no sorrow for his sins, experienced no comfort from Jesus that day.

APPLICATION

The Gospel is good news. The good news is that Jesus still comforts people who know they have messed up and done wrong. Being profoundly sad about the things we have said, done or even thought, is a good thing because it makes forgiveness possible.

Not only does God forgive but He helps us to change to become better people – people who are more like His Son, Jesus.

Ultimately those who have mourned their sins will experience the comfort of Heaven forever.

Challenge the group to reflect on their lives and recognise that they too have sins to mourn and seek forgiveness for. Assure them that God will comfort them.

Allow the group space to respond by leading them in prayer.

QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever truly regretted something you have said or done?
2. How would you feel if you were in trouble where the consequences were serious, only to have someone forgive and not punish you?

For some deeper thought:

3. Often we are blind to our own sin and desensitised to its seriousness. What sinful ways of living are deemed 'fun' or 'harmless' by the world, but which are offensive to God?
4. How would you describe your experience of God's 'comfort'?

SONG

A Time of Reflection

<https://youtu.be/zY5o9mP22V0?si=PA3hBxB7pdKd7gkR> It is Well, Audrey Assad

SARDINES

Select one young person to go and hide, give them a couple of minutes to do this. Then in one or two minute intervals, send out another person to go and find them. Once they find them they need to hide with them until everyone has found the person who is hiding.

When we feel sorrow we often feel alone, and when we are sad or frustrated we often try to do things on our own, but it is only when we allow Jesus to comfort us and we sit with him we find peace, just as within this game when we find the person we are looking for we can sit with them and be with them and more and more people join in we realise that we are not alone and then we can feel God's comfort when we ask for forgiveness and spend time with him.

SESSION FOUR

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK



THE BIG IDEA

Followers of Jesus aren't to use others as their servants, but they are to serve others just as Jesus came to serve us.



THE WORD

Matthew 20v25-28



INTRODUCTION

What is meekness? Ask the young people if they know what meekness means.

Does it mean: choosing to be gentle even when we have the strength to be powerful or being a pushover, allowing others to trample over you?

Jesus has been logically building up His famous sermon on the mount. He began teaching blessed are the poor in Spirit, highlighting how we're spiritually bankrupt before a perfect God. Then He moved on to those who mourn, a logical conclusion for those who have nothing to bring before a perfect God. What does it look like when a person comes to the end of themselves and realises there's nothing they can do to reach this perfect God?

Answer: They become meek – that is, they choose to be gentle even when they have the strength to be powerful.

How could someone who has nothing to offer to God be prideful or arrogant? After all, have you ever seen a homeless person boast about being poor? Instead, recognising our total inability to come to God on our own (John 15v5) makes us humble. Christians want to serve others, even when they don't deserve it because Jesus served us while we were His enemy.

So we know what meekness is, but what does it look like in practice? Why not share a few examples of your own with the young people?

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 🎵

Activity ✂️

Serve others

THE TALK

Right before this passage, the mother of James and John (two of the Apostles) had asked Jesus if her sons could sit in a position of honour in Jesus' Kingdom. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He had been talking about the Kingdom of God. Indeed, the Sermon on the Mount is like a manual for being a citizen of the Kingdom! Unfortunately, many people and even the disciples misunderstood Jesus talking about the Kingdom. Based on a misunderstanding of the Old Testament, many believed that the Messiah (God's Saviour) would be a king of Israel who would get rid of Israel's enemies, the Romans. Therefore, James and John's mother was basically asking Jesus if her sons could be the equivalent of Prime Minister. They were looking for power and prestige. As a result, Matthew 20v24 tells us the other disciples were 'disgusted at the brothers!

With this in mind, Jesus responds by showing what true power and prestige look like. He says in verse 25 that the rulers of the Gentiles (non-Jews) lord it over them. (You could ask the young people for famous examples of this e.g. Putin etc.) Then in verse 26 He makes a contrast, "It shall not be so among you." Jesus is saying that worldly people who hate God and His ways, will often use others to their advantage and will use power to get their way. In contrast, in the Sermon

on the Mount and throughout the Bible, Jesus shows us a different way. He says something shocking in verse 27: If you want to be first, be a slave. Isn't it true the leaders we look up to most are those who do the most for others?

In verse 28, Jesus gives us a reason to be different - because He was! We aren't meek or any of the other things mentioned in the Beatitudes in order to win God's approval. Instead, we do these things out of gratitude for what God has done for us. For example, I don't buy my fiancée flowers in order to earn her approval, but instead I do it because I love her! Unlike Jesus, we will never live perfectly and sometimes we will look more like the world than we do like Jesus. So if you want a perfect example of meekness, don't look to your leader but look to Jesus. Jesus is God and had the right to come to earth in a golden chariot, ushered in by lightning bolts, getting everyone to bow down to Him. At His second coming, Jesus will come in such a fashion (Revelation 19v11); however, when He first came to earth He came as a little baby in a poor family. He was stern when He needed to be, but for the most part He was gentle and served people, even the lowest of people. Why not have a think who you could serve and how you could serve them?

APPLICATION

To summarise, the Bible often tells us to put others before ourselves (Philippians 2v4) because Jesus is the ultimate example of this. In our reading, Jesus said He would pay a ransom for many. He paid that ransom to God, whom we have all wronged, and He paid it with His own life, taking the punishment we deserve. If Jesus has done this for us, how much more ought we to do things to serve one another?

QUESTIONS

1. Describe meekness in your own words.
2. Who were the two sons whose mother brought a request to Jesus?
3. Do you find it easy or hard to serve others? Why or why not?
4. What Jesus did on the cross can be yours by faith. What does this mean to you?

Deeper questions (For those curious or with faith):

1. If you're honest, do you look more like the world or like Jesus in how you treat others?
2. Have you ever been like James and John and asked Jesus for a position of honour, maybe because you feel like you deserve it?
3. Do you only serve those who it's easy to serve i.e. likeable/respectable people (The Pharisees did this), or do you serve the lowest in society?
4. Does what Jesus did to serve you motivate you to serve others? Why/why not?
5. Decide to serve someone unlikely this week. If you want you can tell someone you trust so they can keep you accountable to actually do it.

SONG

A Time of Reflection

<https://youtu.be/UoHrBNTfzIs?si=jJWYQDOtj-Ir63Fq> Gratitude, Brandon Lake

SERVE OTHERS

We aren't called to be served but to serve others, why not choose some young people, or have the leaders do this to serve others at the start of the session.

1. Set up the space like a restaurant and welcome the young people in.
2. Sit them and serve them a drink and some food (fruit, toast, whatever works for your group).
3. Don't let the person you are serving get up to help but insist you are there to serve them.

Just as Jesus served his disciples and those around him and he continues to serve us and help us.

SESSION FIVE

BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER



THE BIG IDEA

True contentment and purpose can only be had in Jesus.



THE WORD

Matthew 5v6

Psalm 42v1&2

John 4v1-45

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 🎵

▶ INTRODUCTION

Play a game of 'Would you Rather'

Here are a few suggestions:

- Would you rather team up with Batman or Captain Marvel?
- Would you rather swim in a pool full of Nutella or a pool full of Biscoff spread?
- Would you rather be 11ft (3.35m) tall or 1ft (0.3m) tall?
- Would you rather be royalty 1,000 years ago or an average person today?
- Would you rather always be 10 minutes late or always be 20 minutes early?
- Would you rather be hungry all the time or thirsty all the time?
- Would you rather go to bed a little bit hungry or wake up absolutely starving?

You could put these on a PowerPoint and split the room, and get them to move between their choices.

The point of the game is to think a little bit more about being hungry and thirsty.

THE TALK

We need food, water, air, shelter, clothing and sleep to survive. Jesus meets this woman at the well as she is coming to fill up on one of these essentials of living. He challenges her about the lifestyle she has lived and offers something that will satisfy her thirst for the rest of her life.

We are told a few key facts about this woman. While her name was never revealed, we know she was a Samaritan, a race with whom Jews did not associate, as Scripture explains. We know she had five husbands, and the man she currently was with wasn't her husband. We also know, from understanding cultural and historical traditions of that time, that women typically drew water in groups in the morning, and it was often a social occasion. The fact that she was drawing water alone at midday, (the hottest time in the day) probably indicates she didn't want to associate with the other women in the village or they did not want to spend time with her. Jesus asks for a drink of water (John 4v7).

The woman asked Jesus a series of questions when He requested a drink: How can you ask me for a drink? (v9) Where can you get this living water? (v11) Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock? (v12) Jesus told her not only who He was, the Son of God, the Messiah, but that He had come

to offer living water, "but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (v14). Jesus explains the way that thirst can be quenched when we are in a right relationship with Him, which will lead to eternal life.

Jesus in the Beatitudes, invites us as Christians to be transformed by a desire for a right relationship with Himself and with one another.

This kind of righteousness is about more than a personal moral code. According to Jesus, it is possible to become consumed with following rules without craving right relationships, just as the Scribes and the Pharisees (v20).

Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are motivated not by an appetite for selfish gain but by a hunger for love that compels a person to be just and fair toward others, seeking peace with all and to give generously (Matthew 5v38-42). The message of this Beatitude is clear. Jesus invites us to trust Him with the things we cannot live without, while at the same time becoming consumed with a hunger and thirst for the right relationships of His Kingdom and with others. The conclusion is satisfaction.

APPLICATION

Jesus makes no difference in the people He will talk to. The fact that the woman at the well was of such low standing, gender, race, and marital status, made no difference - they talked directly.

Only Jesus can offer salvation that satisfies. Jesus offers living water. This water is not like regular water but rather comes from God Almighty and lasts forever.

Jesus wants us, when we have experienced this life-giving water, this righteousness that can only come from Jesus, to thirst and hunger after it every day. Through His life and teaching, Jesus is slowly but surely changing our hearts, teaching us to love one another like He does and leading us to Heaven, where righteousness will be what we eat and drink every single day. This will be true satisfaction.

So how do we do this? By reading God's word, by praying for a right relationship with Jesus and with other people. By relationships that are marked with love, honesty and openness and by being a witness to others who do not know Jesus yet.

QUESTIONS

1. What can I do to make sure I hunger and thirst for righteousness?
2. What are the things in my life that hinder this and need to stop? (Bad friendships, temptation, not knowing what the Bible says on certain things)
3. What things do I need to build into my life to make me hunger and thirst after righteousness?

SONG

A Time of Reflection

https://youtu.be/b3NeIRb1LY4?si=Wnc-l1M_GimpTtY9 God of Justice, Tim Hughes

<https://youtu.be/L-9ALZrds-o?si=gyl-TXlaN17DkQCY> Hungry, Kathryn Scott

SESSION SIX

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL



THE BIG IDEA

God is a God full of mercy who has shown us His amazing love and mercy by sending His Son Jesus to save us from our sins. Because of all this, He calls His disciples to show mercy to others also.



THE WORD

Psalms 103:8-13

Psalms 145:8-9

Luke 10:25-37



INTRODUCTION

One of the most famous films from the 1980s was 'The Karate Kid'. The story of 'Daniel son' and his teacher Mr Miyagi. One of the main characters in the film is a former soldier, John Kreese. He runs a Karate school called Cobra Kai. There is a scene in the film when Kreese is instructing his pupils, and he says:

"We do not train to be merciful here. Mercy is for the weak. Here, in the streets, in competition. A man confronts you; he is the enemy. An enemy deserves no mercy. What is the problem, Mr. Lawrence?"

(You can watch the clip here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pyx2DesNZR8>)

Many of us think like John Kreese that mercy is for the weak. In this lesson, we are going to explore that showing mercy is not weakness but that being someone who shows mercy to others reflects the character of God. God is a God of mercy and calls His followers to be people who show God's mercy to others. Jesus teaches, "blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy." (Matthew 5:7) Remember the beatitudes are Jesus' teaching on what it looks like to live in the Kingdom of God, under the rule and reign of God.

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions?

Worship Song 🎵

Game 🎲

Scavenger Hunt

THE TALK

God is merciful.

We see in the Scriptures that God is a God of mercy. Psalm 145v8 says, “The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” This is God’s covenant love. We read in Lamentations 3v22 that, “the steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end.” God’s mercy goes on and on forever. It is an essential part of His character.

We need God’s mercy.

Question: What does it mean to receive God’s mercy? Activity to help answer that:

Split the boys into groups of 5/6 and give them the following scenarios. Perhaps print them off on pieces of paper (see attached resource).

Here are six things that you could do which are wrong:

1. Cheating in an exam at school.
2. Skipping school for the day.
3. Sending a horrible message on Snapchat to someone.
4. Punching and pushing your brother or sister.
5. Shouting at your parents.
6. Stealing a bar of chocolate from a local shop.

Here are some of the consequences and punishment you could face from your parents for doing any of these:

1. Phone taken off you for a week
2. Not allowed to play computer games for a week
3. No pocket money for a month
4. Grounded for one week
5. No YouTube for a month
6. Cleaning the bathroom in the house for a month

Aim: Match the punishments to the offence. Take 5 mins to do this as a group.

Wrap up: Ask each group to tell you what punishments they have matched to the crimes and to tell you why!

You and I need God’s mercy. The Scriptures tell us that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Left to our own devices we all deserve God’s punishment and judgement for our sin.

Let’s take one of the scenarios we have just thought about. Perhaps you sent a horrible message to someone on Snapchat. You deserve to be punished for what you have done. There are consequences for your actions and so your parents take your phone off you for a week! Because of our sin, we deserve God’s punishment - separation from God.

Imagine though that your parents chose to show you mercy and gave your phone back to you after two days. Five days earlier than you thought! You don’t deserve it back. You deserve to have it taken off you for the full week.

In the same way, God has chosen to show us mercy by not treating us as our sins deserve. As Psalm 103v10 tells us God “does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.” That is good news! How has God done this? Through the death on the cross of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, which satisfied the wrath of God. We receive mercy because of Jesus. 1 Peter 2v10 puts it like this, “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

We need to show God’s mercy

In Luke 10v25-37, an expert in the law puts Jesus to the test and asks Him, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus replies, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”. The lawyer replies, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.” Jesus says you’re right! “do this, and you will live.” But the lawyer isn’t really happy with the answer and so he asks Jesus, “Who is my neighbour?”

To answer this, Jesus tells us a story (parable) about a man who is attacked and left half dead. Jesus then goes on to tell us how two people (a Priest and a Levite), who you would expect to stop and help, walk on by on the other side of the road. But a third person comes (a Samaritan), who you wouldn’t expect to stop. He stops and helps the man and dresses his wounds. Jesus then asks which one was the neighbour to the hurt man? The lawyer replies, “The one who showed him mercy”. Jesus says go and do likewise.

APPLICATION

Jesus says in Luke 6v36 “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Because we have received God’s mercy in Christ, we are also called to show others mercy, to forgive others and to be compassionate and kind to other people. To show mercy towards someone is to show them kindness, forgiveness, patience, or love, even when they don’t deserve it.

QUESTIONS

1. Have you asked for God’s mercy in your own life to forgive your sins?
2. Who can we show God’s love and compassion to?
3. Have you ever been shown mercy? How did it make you feel?

SONG

A Time of Reflection

https://youtu.be/1GiZL60c80?si=yckWiM90_Th7Vii- His Mercy is More, The Gettys

SCAVENGER HUNT

Write each Beatitude on slips of paper and hide them in a designated area. Tell the young people the boundaries of the scavenger hunt area and give them a time limit as a team, or as individuals, as time and size of the group permits. They have to take a picture with each of the Beatitudes in the area that they found them.

SESSION SEVEN

BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART



THE BIG IDEA

Jesus is the truly pure human. He can make us pure so that we have the pure joy of knowing God.



THE WORD

1 John 3v1-3

Matthew 5v8



INTRODUCTION

Set a couple of jugs of water on a table that all the young people can see. If they can see you pour the water into the jugs (from a newly opened bottle), it works better. Then put all sorts of other things into one jar, while leaving the other undisturbed. For example, you might put some tomato sauce in, or some dog food or something else that evidently makes the water in that jug impure and unappealing.

Ask the young people which jug they'd like to drink from. While you might well get a few joke answers, the fact that the pure water is much more desirable than the impure water, will be obvious to everyone present.

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 🎵

Activity ✂️

Science Experiment

THE TALK

We often desire purity. Some of us might say that we'd like to drink this impure water just to taste what it's like or for a bit of fun, but if you were really thirsty we all know which we'd rather have. With precious metals like gold or silver, the more pure it is, the more people will desire it and value it highly. In lots of sports, there is joy in doing something purely – to hit a golf ball or kick a football, with the full force you want to deliver all going into the ball and none of it being lost to the ground, feels great! All sorts of things are advertised as giving pure pleasure. Whether they really do or not is a different story, but even the fact that advertisers use this language is significant – we often desire purity.

God desires purity. He especially desires purity from human beings. He is our Maker, and He wants us to have a pure character. The core of a pure character is a heart full of love for Him, that naturally overflows into love for other people too. In this loving purity, there is joy beyond measure. To live in a loving relationship with God and be able to share in loving relationships with others is true joy and real life. Nothing else gets remotely close to it. Heaven will be a world full of such loving joy, where all who have trusted in Christ live in love for God and love for each other forever and ever! This is why Jesus said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matthew 5v8).

This world – unlike Heaven – is clearly not a place of pure love and joy. Thank God there is a great deal of love and joy in it, but at the same time it's clear to all that there are many negative things in this world that stop it from being a place of pure love and joy. What is wrong with the world? I am. So are you. We don't have pure characters full of unblemished love for God. Ever since Adam and Eve first disobeyed God we've all had corrupt characters. This is seen in our relationships with other people. Haven't you found, for example, that you might criticize someone for doing something

that you would actually be happy enough to do yourself? That, it's unfair for your friend to insist on having their way, but it would be okay for you to insist on having your way? That it was mean of your brother or sister to eat the last chocolate when you would have done the same and thought it was fine?

That we're naturally corrupt rather than pure is seen all the more in our attitude to God. We often live with little thought of Him, and if He does begin to enter our thoughts usually our reaction is to try and close our hearts and minds to Him. This would never be the case if we were pure. Instead, we would delight in God every moment. It would be our supreme joy to sing, pray and study our Bibles. Everything in life – schoolwork, sports, helping around the house, socialising – would be done in an awareness of His loving presence and gladly giving glory to Him.

So, then, we're not naturally pure and that's an enormous problem. Here is the good news! Jesus Christ is pure! He is God and He became human. As a human, He lived a life of spotless joyful purity. The last three words of our Bible reading in this lesson are simple but so significant: 'He is pure' (1 John 3v3). Having lived a life in perfect purity, Jesus nevertheless died a sin-bearing death. On the cross, He took the punishment for our impurity. All and any who sincerely embrace Him as their Rescuer can be forgiven and brought into God's family, with all the blessings that brings, now and forever! This is the great gift that John celebrates in the first portion of our reading: 'See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God' (1 John 3v1). When we come honestly to Jesus with a willingness to turn from our impurity, He forgives us and welcomes us into God's family. Then we are counted pure and can anticipate sharing in the blessing that Jesus promised when He said,

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matthew 5v8).

Having experienced this wonderful grace, Christian people are enabled to become more and more pure as we journey through this life towards our heavenly home. As our heavenly Father helps us, we come to love Him more deeply and other people more truly – we become more pure. This purifying process will find its

completion when we go to be with Jesus forever. That's why John says 'When He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure' (1 John 3:2v3).

God desires purity. He loves us beyond measure even though we are not pure. So much so that He has come in Jesus Christ – the truly pure human – to offer us a wonderful rescue.

APPLICATION

Let's trust in Jesus and have the pure joy of knowing God!

QUESTIONS

(1 and 2 for everyone; 3 and 4 for those who want to dig deeper):

1. Why is purity desirable?
2. How can we become pure?
3. As Christians, how might we grow in purity?
4. Does the purity of Jesus Christ thrill your heart? How can you get to know him better?

SONG

A Time of Reflection

https://youtu.be/KpSIBsxstEc?si=4RFR_dXsBfu8Q92q Purify my heart, Oasis Worship

SCIENCE EXPERIMENT

Put the young people into small groups and get everyone to put on a pair of gloves. Pass out 2 small cups, one with water and one with bleach and some food colouring. The water represents our lives, and the food colouring is our sin, get the young people to mix a small amount of food colouring into the cup with water and stir it around to make the water coloured. This is what happens when we sin. Then the bleach represents God. When we invite God into our lives and we say sorry for the bad things we have done (pour in the bleach until the water is clear) then we are right with God and He has forgiven us.

SESSION EIGHT

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS



THE BIG IDEA

Bringing peace through the gospel and person of Jesus.



THE WORD

Matthew 5v9



INTRODUCTION

Play a game called Pyramid Cups.

You will need sturdy plastic cups and a table. Divide the young people into teams - you might want to do elimination or round-robin.

Give each of the players on one team a cup.

“I need everyone with a cup to put one of your hands on your hip.”

Then, make a fist with the other hand, put it up in the air, and place your cup on top of it.

When I say “Go,” the team without cups snatches them from the other team, runs to the table with the cups and builds a pyramid. Time the team from the moment you say “go” to the pyramid is built.

Then, the teams switch roles. The team that builds the pyramid the quickest wins that round. When the game is over, tally the points and declare a winner.

I think we should go ahead and call a “truce” from our cup war.

That was a great game, but if we had continued playing, it could have become more intense.

As humans, we crave peace and feel uncomfortable with turmoil and unrest. Since sin entered the world, God has desired a peaceful relationship with us. The word peace is mentioned in all but one New Testament book. It's a central theme in Christianity and we come across it in the Beatitudes in Matthew's gospel.

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 🎵

Activity ✂️

Hot Air Balloon Debate

THE TALK

We have maybe heard of phrases such as, 'the peace process' or 'peace in our time'. What does it mean and what does Jesus mean whenever we hear him say, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Matthew 5v9

The Bible teaches us that, to bring about peace, we should not just wait around until things settle down, rather we must be active in bringing about agreement. Which is what we see in what Jesus did for us. Ultimately to bring about harmony, agreement and peace, God sent His only Son to be a sacrifice for our sin. So, when we trust in Jesus as our Saviour and Lord we have peace with God. This Beatitude is primarily about making peace firstly with God and then with ourselves. We do this through Jesus and our trust in Him as our Lord and Saviour.

Jesus gave us two commands in the New Testament, And he said to him, "You shall love

the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22v37-40. Once we have peace with God then we make peace with those around us, seeking to be witnesses to them of the peace that Jesus brings to our lives.

Paul tells us that when God reconciled Himself to us through Christ, God called us to bring this message to others. "Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5v20). This means spreading the gospel message that all people can have a restored relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION

A minister tells a story about being peacemakers in a simple way, to help change people's lives.

"As a church, a congregation, we took on a large building project in a pretty busy part a large town with lots of people living nearby. The neighbours endured the disruption of their lives as we built on to our church. I'm sure that contributed to their lack of patience with us. We put out large skips to clear the ground next to the manse next to the church, it was all a mess. One neighbour had a different point of view. He didn't like coming out of his front door and looking across the road at a big skip and all the mess. He wanted to know what we were going to do.

All the neighbours and some of our property committee from our church and myself met at the skip. This man was angry. After he'd let off some steam I asked where he recommended we put the skip. You know that was a dangerous question. What he wanted was to move the skip to a better place on the grounds of the church. I said to the group let's go look at what he's talking about. I did not want to do this.

I walked with the neighbours and listened to their complaints. One lady didn't like the security lighting that had been set up to guard the site, they were shining right into her house at night. Another neighbour objected to the mess of clay and soil leading out of the site across the pavements. The man who looked after our property, who'd followed behind and heard the complaints, looked at me and said, "This will be OK. We can make it work, and we can sort the lights out as well, and we will get a cleaning team down to brush the pavements to keep them clean." And that's exactly what we did.

When it came to opening our new halls, we invited our neighbours as special guests, and they just loved it. We thanked them for their patience in our thank you speeches and now they really support us in many ways including the lady's granddaughter who comes to our mums and tots group, where we tell stories of God's love for us in Jesus our Saviour."

QUESTIONS

1. How do we have peace with God?
2. What stops peacemaking?
3. What ways can your BB company be peacemakers?

SONG

A Time of Reflection

<https://youtu.be/cEFGGr1S8SkA?si=g2qiBIH1J80enkMu> God Of This City, Chris Tomlin

HOT AIR BALLON DEBATE

Leaders will preselect a number of celebrities or famous people and assign them to a young person.

Explain the premise: All the young people are the celebrity they have been given and they are all on a hot air balloon, passing over a mountain range and you are going to crash unless you eject several people from the hot air balloon. To decide who gets to stay on the hot air balloon the young people will have a debate.

Give the young people time to prepare their arguments for why they should get to stay on the hot air balloon. Allow the young people a chance to present their case for why they should stay then they vote on who to throw out, if there is a draw they can plead their case and a second vote will be had for the two on the bottom.

SESSION NINE

BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED



THE BIG IDEA

Sometimes people are treated unfairly for what they believe. After Jesus died and rose again his followers were treated badly simply for following Him. Amazingly, His followers didn't give up, they knew they would receive their reward for following Jesus one day when they got to Heaven.



THE WORD

Matthew 5v10-11

Acts 4v1-22



INTRODUCTION

Some of the most dramatic scenes we can watch in any TV programme or movie will take place in a courtroom. Tension will often build when the evidence is being discussed, a defence is being made and the prosecution are building their case.

That is what we find in Acts 4 as the Gospel (the Good News of Jesus) is on trial and the people in the dock are Christians. Their 'crime' is openly being a follower of Jesus – and telling others about Him - among people who didn't like it one bit.

Following Jesus in our day and age can often feel like that. However, the next Beatitude (found in Matthew 5v10-11) that we are going to look at tells us we are blessed EVEN when we are persecuted for being followers of Jesus and openly living out our faith. It's unlikely that we will find ourselves in a courtroom because of our faith in Jesus – not anytime soon anyway – but we are on trial in a different way when people know our faith is in Jesus. People are often looking at our lives and seeing how it matches up to what we say.

We are promised that we are blessed when we realise this, because it helps us to remember His promises to us and that we are living as part of His kingdom.

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 🎵

Game 🎲

Same, Same, Different

THE TALK

In the book of Acts we are told about how the Good News of Jesus spreads across the known world at a rapid rate. However, as part of what this looked like, followers of Jesus are meeting all kinds of opposition. The book records how some are mistreated for their faith, some are thrown into prison, and some are even killed because they refused to stop telling people that Jesus is both Saviour and Lord.

In Acts 4, it is the religious leaders who have the greatest problem with what two of Jesus' followers are doing – Peter and John. After sharing the news that Jesus is alive (v2), they are brought to stand trial before the religious leaders, just like Jesus was on His way to the cross.

Thousands of people respond to this message (v4) that Jesus is not a dead religious leader but is in actual fact alive. It is just one example of the incredible way in which the Good News of Jesus spreads through the book of Acts.

During this trial, Peter's response is to tell them about who Jesus really is. In verses 9 – 12, Peter boldly tells them about the Jesus who has the power to heal, who is the cornerstone of the church, who was rejected by the world and who is able to save us from our sins.

It's a powerful testimony of who they know Jesus to be and made possible because the Holy Spirit was working in him, as verse 8 tells us.

This is confirmed by those who are watching on. Verse 13 says “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”

The powerful and impressive responses of these men who were on trial didn't come because they were well educated, clever or special. In fact, the opposite of this was true and is a reminder of how God promises to work through ordinary people, just like us, when we are not afraid to openly live out our faith in Him.

Those watching on saw how they had no real basis to charge them and, eventually, they are allowed to go on one condition as verse 18 records “So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

This time they both reply to say they literally cannot help talking about Jesus, or what they have seen or heard from him, which is a powerful lesson for us in how we live as His followers.

The prosecution are still unable to find anything to punish them for and after threatening them further, they are allowed to leave and the Lord continues to be at work through them, as the rest of the Acts goes on to tell us in great detail.

APPLICATION

When we are a follower of Jesus, the Bible makes it clear we shouldn't try to hide it.

The thought of telling others about Jesus or openly living out our faith, can be scary. We think about the things people might say about us or how they will leave us out of conversations or things they're doing, which can often cause us to try to hide our faith.

In other parts of the world, there is a very real threat of losing family, possessions or even your life because of faith in Jesus. However, the story of Peter and John is a reminder of what we are promised in this Beatitude. When they were put on trial for openly following and telling others about Jesus, their response was (v20), “we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”

Sometimes Christians will think or say, “I’ll just live a good life and others should see that I have faith in Jesus”. How we live should reflect Jesus, we should live good lives, but there will come a time when we will also need to explain to others who our faith is in – that Jesus is our Saviour and our Lord.

This story in Acts 4 shows us that no matter how difficult the world makes it for us to be a follower of Jesus – whether through all kinds of trials and even persecution - we will find that we are blessed every bit as much as Peter and John were. Thousands of people were coming to faith in a time Christians were on trial for teaching that Jesus is alive. Just like these two disciples, we will find that the Holy Spirit is with us, and that is a reminder that we are truly blessed!

? QUESTIONS

1. How can you openly live out your faith in Jesus?
2. What does it look and feel like to know the Holy Spirit is with you, the way He was with Peter and John in Acts 4?
3. Peter and John felt unable to stop talking about Jesus and what they knew to be true about Him. What are some of the things we should tell others about Him?

Suggested foundation questions if more suitable for your group:

1. What are some of the ways you think the world makes it difficult for Christians to live out their faith nowadays?

(See if the young people list the ways in which Christian faith can clash with cultural issues of today like marriage, abortion etc. Also, those who may take offence that we are sharing the message that only Jesus can save us from our sins, as outlined in Acts 4v12)

2. Peter and John were used by God in amazing ways. Look at what was said about them in verse 13, how is this different to the ways in which we normally think about Christians?

(The idea is often that Christians are ‘good living’, respectable, educated, middle class people. This verse reminds us that God is at work through ordinary people just like us. Our weaknesses show the Lord’s strength even more clearly.)

3. What do you think it tells us about what faith in Jesus looks like that they answered the way they did in verse 20?

(Peter and John’s response shows that their faith in Jesus was the most important thing in their lives. If it wasn’t, they would have gladly accepted this way offered to them to escape punishment.

Faith in Jesus is meant to be just as important to us, not a take-it-or-leave-it component that we can add on to our lives)

SONG

A Time of Reflection

<https://youtu.be/nxxr47zEUxE?si=lnUvadeOoUegefYm> Touch of Heaven, Hillsong

SAME, SAME, DIFFERENT

Aim of Activity: Learning to appreciate and honour our differences takes practice.

Instructions/Rules:

“The stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone”

How does it work?

Ask the group to look at two different people and list two things that are the same and one thing that makes them different.

There’s so much more that makes us unique. Help the young people understand how to find the things we all have in common, whether it’s a love of dancing or a distaste for Brussels sprouts.

SESSION TEN

REJOICE AND BE GLAD



THE BIG IDEA

We are to rejoice when we experience opposition for being a Christian because Jesus promised that all who trust in Him would experience opposition, but He also promised that we will live with Him forever in a brand new world where there will be no suffering of any kind.



THE WORD

Acts 16:16-34



INTRODUCTION

Ask the young people to tell you when they feel happy / what makes them very glad.

Ask the young people if they think it is possible for people who are being persecuted because they are a Christian, to rejoice.

Check the Open Doors website (www.opendoorsuk.org) for recent stories about persecuted Christians who have been able to rejoice.

ACTIVITIES

Discussion Questions ?

Worship Song 🎵

Game 🎲

Off Balance

Push and Pulled

THE TALK

In the previous study, we saw that Jesus said, “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.” (Matthew 5v10-11).

We learned that this means it shouldn’t come as a surprise when the world makes it difficult for us to be a follower of Jesus. In fact, it helps us to remember His promises to us and that we are living as part of His kingdom.

Jesus went on to say, “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5v12)

In Acts 16v22-24, we read about how Paul and Silas were arrested in Philippi, beaten with rods, and put in prison with their feet fastened in stocks.

The magistrates treated Paul and Silas in this way because the owners of a slave girl complained about them after Paul had commanded an evil spirit to come out of the girl. The slave girl’s owners were annoyed that this had ended their hope of making money from her fortune telling.

How did Paul and Silas react to this unjust persecution? Luke informs us, “About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God” (v25).

Paul and Silas did what Jesus commands us to do in Matthew 5v12, they rejoiced and were glad.

When Paul wrote to the church in Philippi that was formed during his visit to this city which is recorded in Acts 16, he said, “For it has been

granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had” (Philippians 1v29-30a).

When Paul said that Christians have been granted to suffer on behalf of Christ, he means now that Christ is no longer physically present in the world, He gives His followers the privilege of taking His place and being subjected to the kind of treatment He would receive if He were still here in the flesh. No honour can equal that of standing in for Christ and standing up for Him against all the opposition of the world.

The response to this privilege is set out in the only command that’s contained in the Beatitudes – we’re to “rejoice and be glad”. The honour of suffering for Christ should fill us with an intense, deep joy.

Jesus went on to say that Christians should “rejoice and be glad” because their “reward is great in Heaven”. This clearly looks forward to eternity. But, when we looked at the first Beatitude, we saw that we enter the kingdom of heaven the moment we trust Jesus to be our Saviour. So, the joy produced by persecution isn’t just reserved for when we die, it’s something we experience here and now.

The Bible gives several reasons why God’s people can “rejoice and be glad” when they suffer for Christ:

It identifies them with Christ (1 Peter 4v12-14)

Jesus constantly faced opposition from the ungodly, and His followers should rejoice whenever they are called upon to share with Him in what He suffered for us.

It identifies them with the prophets (Matthew 5v12)

Christians who suffer for their faith join an illustrious roll of honour which contains people like Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel.

It strengthens their assurance of salvation

This is brought out in the phrase, “your reward is great in heaven”, and it’s underlined by what Jesus said to His disciples, “If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15v19)

The world can’t tolerate the idea that God has a people of His own, and it’s enraged when God’s people refuse to conform to its standards. But, even that fury becomes a means of blessing to those who belong to God’s kingdom because it assures them that they are a citizen of it.

It helps them to grow as a Christian (Romans 5v3-4)

Any kind of suffering, including persecution, should be seen as an instrument in God’s hand

APPLICATION

The Beatitudes conclude with Jesus’ wonderful promise that there’ll be a great reward in Heaven for those who are persecuted for their faithfulness to Him.

No Christian relishes persecution of any kind, but the more we understand its true significance, the more we’ll learn to rejoice in it. One author has said, ‘Our present sufferings are like an ugly porch which leads to...an unspeakably glorious mansion’ (Stuart Olyott)

Can you look forward to a glorious future because you’re trusting in Christ alone to save you from your sin, and you’re relying on His power to overcome whatever opposition comes your way for doing so?

The disciples were on trial for teaching that Jesus is alive. Just like these two disciples, we will find that the Holy Spirit is with us, and that is a reminder that we are truly blessed!

which is intended for our blessing because it drives us to Christ, it makes us more consciously dependent on God’s help, and it enables us to grow spiritually stronger.

It presents an opportunity to share the gospel

When Christians are criticised, slandered, misrepresented, or attacked they have an opportunity to react in ways that demonstrate the reality of the power of the gospel, and they often get the chance to share the truth of the gospel with their persecutors.

Paul probably wrote his letter to the church at Philippi from a prison cell in Rome. In it he said, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.” (Philippians 1v12-13). Paul’s imprisonment had provided him with an opportunity to share the gospel with people who wouldn’t otherwise have heard it.

? QUESTIONS

1. Why can Christians rejoice now when they suffer for being a Christian?

It identifies them with Christ, it identifies them with the prophets, it strengthens their assurance of salvation, it helps them to grow as a Christian, it presents an opportunity to share the gospel.

2. What can Christians, who are suffering for being a Christian, look forward to?

A great reward in Heaven.

3. Which will last longer, suffering for Christ, or living with Christ?

Living with Christ (Romans 8:18, 2 Corinthians 4:17)

🎵 SONG

A Time of Reflection

<https://youtu.be/1EKrq2Od9x4?si=v-Hgg0-6JiwDsgnX> This is Amazing Grace, Phil Wickham

🧑‍🤝‍🧑 OFF BALANCE

Form groups of four. Have one person stand on one foot in the middle of each group and try to balance as the other people in the group help the person balance. Then have the people in the group try to stop the person from balancing on one foot.

- Which way was easier to balance — the first time or the second time?
- What did the people in the group do to help with balance? To knock the person off balance?

🧑‍🤝‍🧑 PUSHED AND PULLED

Form groups of four to six. Have the people in each group link arms. Then choose one person in each group to face the opposite way from the others. Then have the group travel together in the direction they're facing. The one person facing the opposite direction tries to pull the group his or her way.

- How did you feel during this game?
- How is that like or unlike the way you feel when friends are trying to get you to go somewhere or do something you really don't want to do?



**ADVANCING
CHRIST'S
KINGDOM**