Preschool–Grade 6

The Beatitudes

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: The Beatitudes describe the people of God's kingdom: they start by knowing they need God, and they grow into meek, merciful, pure-hearted peacemakers who stay glad even when they are treated badly.
Bible passage: Matthew 5:1–12. Students read it out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." *Matthew 5:9 (KJV)* and "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." *Matthew 5:3 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read Matthew 4:23–5:12 and Matthew 7:28–29. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses, or go around the room a verse each.

1. Opening game: Rank It (5–10 minutes)

Write on the board: *strong, rich, popular, gentle, forgiving, honest, peacemaker, funny.* Students rank the words from "most admired at school" to "least admired." Compare a few lists. Then ask: *Which of these would Jesus call blessed?* Say: "Jesus went up a mountain, sat down and described the people He calls blessed. Let's read it and see if our lists hold up."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: Matthew 4:23–25 (Jesus preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing, and great multitudes following Him), **then Matthew 5:1–12**, a verse each. Old words in this passage:

- **multitudes** (5:1): big crowds; **when he was set** (5:1): when He had sat down
- **blessed** (5:3–11): God is good to them and they are truly happy
- **poor in spirit** (5:3): knowing you need God and can't be good on your own
- **mourn** (5:4): to be very sad, to grieve; **comforted** (5:4): helped and made to feel better by God
- **meek** (5:5): gentle and humble, not proud; **inherit** (5:5): be given something to keep
- **hunger and thirst after righteousness** (5:6): want to do right the way a starving person wants food
- **merciful** (5:7): kind and forgiving to those who don't deserve it; **obtain** (5:7): receive
- **pure in heart** (5:8): a clean heart, loving God with nothing hidden or fake
- **peacemakers** (5:9): people who help others stop fighting and make things right
- **persecuted** (5:10): treated badly; **for righteousness sake** (5:10): because of doing right
- **revile** (5:11): call bad names, insult; **falsely** (5:11): with lies; **exceeding glad** (5:12): very, very glad

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Then read Matthew 7:28–29 out loud: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." **Doctrine** means teaching.

Notice the shape: every saying has two halves, who is blessed and what God promises. The first (5:3) and the eighth (5:10) both end "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven," like two bookends. Then in 5:11 Jesus turns from "they" to "ye" and speaks right to His listeners.

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Look at your ranked list. Which words on it does Jesus call blessed in Matthew 5:3–10? Which ones aren't there at all?
2. The first blessing is for the "poor in spirit" (5:3). Why might knowing you need God be the starting place for everything else?
3. Meek doesn't mean weak (5:5). What does a meek person look like at school, online or in a family argument?
4. "Hunger and thirst after righteousness" (5:6). What is something you want badly? What would it look like to want doing right that much?
5. Being a peacemaker (5:9) is more than staying out of fights. What does it take to actually make peace between two people?
6. Jesus said, "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad" when people revile us for His sake (5:11–12). How can someone be glad when they are being treated badly?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **blessed** means God is good to them and they are truly happy; **peacemakers** help others stop fighting and make things right; **poor in spirit** means knowing you need God.
Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Matthew 5:9 this week; keep working on Matthew 5:3 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "The Beatitudes begin with the poor in spirit, people who know they need God, and the kingdom of heaven is theirs. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it on the day of Pentecost: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus said, 'Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God' (John 3:5, KJV)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Which blessing in Matthew 5:3–10 is easiest for me? Which is hardest, and why?
2. Where is there a fight or a broken friendship that I could help make peace in?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to make you more like the people Jesus called blessed.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence.

This week: do one peacemaking thing: apologize first, help two friends make up, or stop a hurtful conversation.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You that the kingdom of heaven belongs to people who know they need You. We need You. Make us meek and merciful. Give us clean hearts and a hunger to do right. Make us peacemakers, and help us rejoice even when people are unkind because we follow Jesus. Thank You for loving us and making a way to save us through Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

If a student asks how many Beatitudes there are: in the King James Bible, "Blessed" starts nine sayings (Matthew 5:3–11): eight about "they" (5:3–10) and a ninth to "ye" (5:11–12). Teach them as written.

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