



# The Beatitudes

## MEETING AIM

To discover what Jesus means when he says we will be 'blessed' or 'happy'.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:1-12

## BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used either in person or online. Adapt it to fit your own situation.

To be happy or blessed means different things to different people. This session will help children explore the idea that Jesus is talking about something deeper than superficial happiness, rather a state of wellbeing in relationship with God. Particularly, as we emerge from the pandemic, the knowledge that God knows and cares about our situation and wellbeing will be vital for the children in our groups and churches.

## STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Ask the children to share the last time they felt really happy.

## PLAY

10 MINS

**You will need:** emojis of different happy faces

A quick look at the emoji list on your phone or tablet will show lots of different options for happy faces – closed-mouth smiles, open-mouth smiles, laughing, crying, laughing etc. Choose a variety of these happy emojis and show them to the children. Ask them to put the emojis in order of 'happiness'. Do some express more joy than others?

Go on to ask if any of these emojis express longer-term happiness or joy. Or are they just about how you feel now?

## BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** different translations of the Bible; large sheet of paper and marker pens or video-conferencing whiteboard

Read out Matthew 5:1-12 from a child-friendly translation of the Bible, such as the Contemporary English Version. The CEV uses the phrase: "God blesses

those people..." but other translations use different words for the start of each Beatitude. Encourage the children to look at the different translations you have (or use a site like BibleGateway) to discover other ways of wording. Compare them together. What do the children think Jesus means when he says: "God blesses those people...", "Blessed" (NIV, ESV) or "Happy" (GNB)? Read verse 12 again.

Ask the children to choose one of the verses and write it out on the large sheet of paper or the whiteboard facility. Encourage them to doodle around the verse some pictures or words about what they think the verse means.

After a moment, ask the group to look at a verse that someone else has written out and doodled around. What do they think of what has been written? What might they add?

Finally, round up by looking at what has been written and drawn and ask the children to share if they would like to. Ask if they have changed their mind about what Jesus means by being 'happy' or 'blessed'?

## CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is your favourite verse?
- Are there any that you don't understand or don't agree with? Why?
- Are there any that you have experience of? (You might want to have an example from your own life to get the children thinking.)
- What does it mean to be 'happy' or 'blessed'?

## CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** art materials

Make sure everyone has access to art materials (if you're working online, then just paper and crayons or felt-tip pens would be enough; alternatively, deliver some resources to each child before the session). Ask the children to create a piece of artwork (or writing, if they prefer) about what they have discovered through exploring the Bible passage.

This is important time, as when hands are busy, our minds get the chance to process what we have discovered. The

children will be reflecting and the Spirit will be at work in them. You can carry on your discussions from 'Chatting together', but don't try to guide the children or interpret what they are creating. Let them tell you, rather than you imposing your meaning on what they are doing.

## PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** paper and pens

Make sure everyone has paper and pens, and ask the children to think about people they may know who are in the categories that Jesus talks about in the passage. They might feel like they themselves fit into one. Encourage them to write the names down and to pray that they might feel 'happy' and 'blessed'.

## ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for Premier Youth and Children's Work.



## Prayer

### MEETING AIM

To explore the prayer that Jesus taught his friends to pray.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 6:5-15

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used either in person or online. Adapt it to fit your own situation.

Children's reactions to prayer are very different from child to child, and from day to day. Sometimes we can pray with children and they have lots to tell God. At other times, trying to prompt prayer in children can feel like pulling teeth. However, we need to recognise that we ourselves can struggle to pray. Jesus knows this, and in today's story, he tells his friends how they can pray. If you're in a church tradition where this prayer is said regularly, then it's likely that the children already know the words. They may not have dwelt on the meaning, so help them do that in this session.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Ask the children the last time they learned something off by heart. Was it a rhyme? A song? A times table?

### INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

**You will need:** Kim's game equipment (see below)

Ask the children if they can perform any of the things that they have memorised – a song, a poem or even the seven times table. Take turns in performing your party pieces from memory, clapping and congratulating each person after they have taken part (even if they forgot what they were meant to be reciting!).

Alternatively, play Kim's game. Arrange a variety of objects on a tray and challenge the children to memorise as many as they can. Ask the children to shut their eyes (or turn off your camera if you're online) and remove one object. The children then have to look at the tray again to see if they can spot what has gone missing.

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** devices (smartphones or tablets) with the Guardians of Ancora app (if you're online, log on with a device that has the app)

Read Matthew 6:5-15 to the group and then explain that you're going to explore the story using a game. Share out the devices and show the children how to open Guardians of Ancora and put together a new avatar to play. (If you've never played the game before, then practise beforehand so that you know what to do. There is plenty of help available on the Guardians of Ancora website. If you can't source enough devices yourself, then ask parents and carers to send their child with a device of their own.)

Find the story 'How to talk with God' at the Spire (at the top of the map) and invite the children to play through it. When you get to a story section, make sure that you all watch that together. There are a variety of different routes through this story, so the children might go different ways and discover different things. If that's the case, then share what you have discovered once you have all got down the mountain!

If you're working online, then share your screen and get the children to talk you through what you need to do at each point.

The game is based on Luke's version of this story (Luke 11:2-4), which doesn't contain Jesus' general comments about prayer (in Matthew 6:5-8). Read that part out again and ask the children what Jesus is saying here.

If you have time, encourage the children to play the story again (or play with the children giving you advice if you're online), taking a different route than they did before.

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is your favourite verse?
- Are there any that you don't understand or don't agree with? Why?
- Did you already know the prayer that Jesus taught? Where do you know it from?
- Why do you think Jesus taught his friends to pray like this?
- If you know this prayer already, what's the benefit of knowing a prayer like this off by heart?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** art materials

Make sure everyone has access to art materials (if you're working online, then just paper and crayons or felt-tip pens would be enough; alternatively, deliver some resources to each child before the session). Ask the children to create a piece of artwork (or writing, if they prefer) about what they have discovered through exploring the Bible passage.

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### PRAYER

5 MINS

Encourage the children to come up with actions for each section of the prayer Jesus taught (Matthew 6:9-13). Practise them together and then say the prayer with the actions.

Ask if the children would like to pray for anything or anyone in particular. Use the words of Jesus' prayer and the actions you have created to pray for those situations and people. Choose the most appropriate phrase and action to suit each prayer request.

### ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.



## Worry

### MEETING AIM

To reflect on how God knows our worries and we can talk to him about them.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 6:25-34

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used either in person or online. Adapt it to fit your own situation.

Children worry about a lot of things. Much of what they experience is new to them, so they have to cope with a lot of uncertainty. Some children thrive on this and welcome new things, others struggle with change and worry a lot. To us, some of their worries will seem insignificant or ill-founded, but we shouldn't discount them. Help children realise that they can tell God about their worries.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Tell the children about a time when you were worried about something, but you told God all about it and it turned out to be OK.

### INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

**You will need:** pictures of birds and flowers (or the ability to go outside)

Look at your pictures of the birds and flowers together (put them on a PowerPoint presentation, print them or share your screen if you're online). Talk about the different colours that you can see, the different patterns and shapes. Ask the children to choose their favourite bird or flower and tell everyone else why they like it.

Alternatively, if you can, go outside to a garden or graveyard and look for flowers and birds. What can you see? As with the pictures, ask the children to choose their favourite bird or flower. If you're in a graveyard, make sure you're respectful of anyone else there.

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** paper, felt-tip pens'

Make sure everyone has paper and felt-tip

pens and ask the children to draw a picture of one thing that is necessary for life.

Once everyone has finished, encourage the group to show the pictures they have drawn. Chat together about the ideas that are similar and any the children have drawn that are different from the others. How 'necessary' are the ideas that the children have come up with?

Stick up the pictures that the children draw so they can be seen by everyone (if you're online, ask the children to stick up their pictures behind them so they can be seen onscreen). Ask the group if they would be worried if they didn't have these things. What do they think Jesus will say about worry?

Read the passage and whenever you come to something that we might worry about not having (food, drink, clothes etc), ask the group to point out which of the pictures they drew would match up with that idea.

Read the passage again and ask the children to stop you whenever they hear you read a promise that Jesus makes about what the Father will do.

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- Is it easy not to worry?
- Is it easy to trust God's promises?
- Does that mean we never bother to make wise decisions?
- How can we move from worrying to trusting?
- What could you decide to trust God with this week?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** art materials

Make sure everyone has access to art materials (if you're working online, then just paper and crayons or felt-tip pens would be enough; alternatively, deliver some resources to each child before the session). Ask the children to create a piece of artwork (or writing, if they prefer) about what they have discovered through exploring the Bible passage.

This is important time, as when hands are busy, our minds get the chance to process what we have discovered. The

children will be reflecting and the Spirit will be at work in them. You can carry on your discussions from 'Chatting together', but don't try to guide the children or interpret what they are creating. Let them tell you, rather than you imposing your meaning on what they are doing.

### PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** artwork from 'Creative response'

Ask the children to look at their artwork. Encourage them to talk to God on the inside about what they are worried about and how they feel. After a few minutes, ask them to imagine that Jesus is sitting beside them. What does he want to say or do about their worries?

It may be that children talk about some difficult things in this session. Work with parents and carers to ensure that children are supported after the session. It might be worth noting down some of the things the children are worried about (with their permission, of course) so that you can pray for them too. If you need to, make sure you follow your church's safeguarding policy.



## Ask, seek, knock

### MEETING AIM

To know that we can ask God for anything that we need.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 7:7-12

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is designed to be used either in person or online. Adapt it to fit your own situation.

Many children have no trouble asking for things that they want! They are familiar with asking and receiving (or not). As we get older we become more reticent and often go without rather than ask. Here, Jesus says that we need to be bold to ask God for things, to have that freedom we lost as we grew up. He draws the distinction often made between what sinners do – they give their children good things, and what God does – the creator, the source of all things, is more ready to give us good things if we ask.

### STARTING OUT

5 MINS

Start your time together with some simple refreshments (if you can). Ask the children about a time when they received something nice. Don't let this become about expense, rather about specialness.

### INTRO ACTIVITY

10 MINS

**You will need:** a set of simple 'good things' (such as a biscuit, a nice pencil or some coloured paper) and a set of 'bad things' (such as rock, a stick and some orange peel); a bag

Before the session, put all the good and bad things in the bag. Explain that the children should ask you to give them something from your bag and that you will give them an item. (If you're meeting in person, then you can actually give them the item; if you're online, then you can pretend, or promise to deliver the gift to them after the session.)

Encourage the children to ask in the most dramatic, fancy way they can. When they have finished their ornate question, pull out an item from the bag. Ask how they feel about receiving their gift. Did they expect something more? Were they pleased?

Ask what it's like to get something good or something bad – how does that make us feel? And what does it make us think about the giver?

### BIBLE STORY

10 MINS

**You will need:** pens and paper (optional)

Read Matthew 7:7-12 to the group and ask them to come up with a drama sketch that explores what Jesus is talking about. They could do the whole passage or one of three sections: verses 7 and 8; verses 9 to 11; verse 12.

Split the group into pairs or threes (or work all together if you have a smaller group). Give the groups enough time to create their dramas. They could invent stories that fit their chosen section, or re-enact Jesus teaching the crowds. Children may wish to make notes, so make sure everyone has access to pens and paper if they need it. Children who don't like performing can help with devising and directing the drama.

When everyone is ready, invite the pairs or threes (or whole group) to perform their dramas (spotlight the relevant screens if you're online). Congratulate everyone on their sketches and ask if anyone has any thoughts about what Jesus is saying. If you did Session 3 (about worry), does what Jesus says here add anything to what the children discovered then?

### CHATTING TOGETHER

5 MINS

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What is your favourite part of this passage?
- What do you think are the good things God is ready to give us?
- Have you ever asked God for anything? What happened?
- What does it mean to treat others as you want them to treat you?
- Does this passage remind you of any other Bible stories you know?

### CREATIVE TIME

10 MINS

**You will need:** art materials

Make sure everyone has access to art materials (if you're working online, then just paper and crayons or felt-tip pens would be enough; alternatively, deliver

some resources to each child before the session). Ask the children to create a piece of artwork (or writing, if they prefer) about what they have discovered through exploring the Bible passage.

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### PRAYER

5 MINS

**You will need:** artwork from 'Creative response'

Ask the children to look at their artwork. Encourage them to talk with God about what they have been drawing. They may wish to ask him for what they need. If they do, ask them to make a note of it on their artwork so that they can come back to it at a later date to see how God has answered their request.

It may be that children talk about some difficult things in this session. Work with parents and carers to ensure that children are supported after the session. It might be worth noting down some of the things the children are worried about (with their permission, of course) so that you can pray for them too. If you need to, make sure you follow your church's safeguarding policy.