

The Beatitudes

Lesson Plan

Preparation

Materials Needed

- Discussion guide
- Game cards
- Students will need their Bibles

Spiritual Preparation

Read through Matthew chapter 5 slowly and prayerfully. Consider where in your life you need some extra grace to follow the Divine Law and become more Christ-like. Whether or not you want to share with your students exactly where you fall short, it would be good for them to know that you do reflect on your need for conversion, and that we all need to strive toward perfection.

Opening

Prayer: for the Beatitudes

Lord Jesus, you said, "**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**" Keep us from being preoccupied with money and worldly goods, and with trying to increase them at the expense of justice.

Lord Jesus, you said, "**Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**" Help us not to be ruthless with one another, and to eliminate the discord and violence that exists in the world around us.

Lord Jesus, you said, "**Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**" Let us not be impatient under our own burdens and unconcerned about the burdens of others.

Lord Jesus, you said, "**Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they shall be filled.**" Make us thirst for you, the fountain of all holiness, and actively spread your influence in our private lives and in society.

Lord Jesus, you said, "**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.**" Grant that we may be quick to forgive and slow to condemn.

Lord Jesus, you said, "**Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.**" Free us from our obsessions and our evil desires, and fix our eyes on you.

Lord Jesus, you said, "**Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.**" Aid us to make peace in our families, in our country, and in the world.

Lord Jesus, you said, "**Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of justice, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.**" Make us willing to suffer for the sake of right rather than to practice injustice; and do not let us discriminate against our neighbors and oppress and persecute them.

<adapted from *e-Book for Common Prayers* at URL (<http://www.catholic-forum.com/saints/litany15.htm>)>

Opening Discussion

Read Matthew 5 together. Point out to the students how illogical the Beatitudes seem to be. Ask them

What does the word "beatitude" mean? (happiness)

How can "one who mourns" be blessed?

What do you think Jesus' message is in the Beatitudes?

Discussion Guide

Read through the first three paragraphs of the *Law of Love* section, stopping at the table.

Beatitudes Memory Game

The Beatitudes Memory Game is meant to get students familiar with the Beatitudes. It is a matching game, matching the first part of each Beatitude with the second. However, the memorization of the second part of each Beatitude is not the focus here. It would be good for students to memorize the Beatitudes, but it is more important that they begin to understand them. This lesson as a whole focuses only on the first part of each Beatitude.

Preparation

You should have 16 cards, 8 with the first part of each Beatitude (starting with "Blessed are. . .") and 8 with the second part of each Beatitude (starting with "For they . . ." or "For theirs . . ."). Mix the cards up really well, then lay them out face down in a 4 x 4 grid.

Divide the students into two teams.

Game play

Game play is just like the classic "Memory" game. Decide which team will go first. A team member from the first team will turn two cards face up. The goal is to find a complete Beatitude by matching the first part of the Beatitude and the second part. If they find a match, they may take another turn. However, a different student on the team must turn over the next pair of cards. A team may continue to play its turn as long as it finds matches. While the memory part of the game may not be too difficult with a 4 x 4 matrix, to score an actual match students must know the entire Beatitude and match the first and second parts. Once they fail to find a match, the second team takes its turn in the same way.

You may decide if you want the teams to be able to consult during the turn or not.

Conclusion

As pairs are found, place them out of game play face-up, keeping each Beatitude together.

Once the game is complete (and you have rewarded the team that found most pairs if you choose to do so), have the students complete the table in their discussion guides using the paired cards.

Continue the Discussion

Before you continue with the discussion guide, review the key concepts in the *Law of Love* section. Make the following points:

- God gives us His Law, not to control our lives, but to guide us to what is truly good and fulfilling for us. In this sense, even the 10 Commandments are "Beatitudes" because they lead us toward happiness.
- The New Law did not replace the Old Law. To think of the Old Law as harsh, unloving, cold and external is to miss the point. The Old Law came from a loving God who wanted to lead His children to lives of love and fulfillment. In Jesus' time, the Pharisees and Sadducees had forgotten the true purpose of the Old Law and so were criticized by Jesus - not for following the Old Law but for following it coldly and without the love to which it was supposed to lead.
- The Old Law gave us the first steps toward love. The New Law (Jesus) gives us the fulfillment of love.

The Beatitudes and Grace

Read through this section and then discuss each discussion question in the guide.

Discussion questions are between the red lines

Beatitudes and Virtue

Read through this section up to the table. Review the definition of virtue and moral virtue. Tells students that the Beatitudes as virtues call us to change not only the way we act, but to change our very hearts. However, such a conversion begins by changing our acts - by getting into the habit of doing good.

Activity: Habits & Virtue

Have students divide into two groups once again. Each group should discuss the list of distractions and decide where each one belongs. Once the groups finish their discussions, come together as a class and discuss what each group decided.

As the discussion guide key states, there may be a few different possible combinations. However, the important part of this activity is the definition of each Beatitude as a virtue. After you discuss the match that each group made between the Beatitude and the distraction, ask them how they would define each Beatitude as a virtue, then read the definition from the answer key. Refer back to the opening prayer for more help as well.

Making Us Like Christ

Read through this section up to the table.

Discussion

The purpose of this discussion is to show how Jesus displayed each of the Beatitudes, and how the Beatitudes can make us more like Christ. If your group is really familiar with the Gospel, and are able to come up with examples of Jesus living out each Beatitude, then a general discussion of each story is OK. There is no need to look up the stories in the Bible unless there is one you find of special importance.

However, if your group gives you nothing but blank stares when you ask them which stories from the Gospel show Jesus displaying each Beatitude, it would be important to have students see the stories in the Bible. In this case, you can give the answers from the answer key, which are general statements about how Jesus lived out the Beatitudes, and then spend some time reading through each of the stories below. Have students open their Bible, find the Gospel, chapter and verse (you may need to instruct them on how to do so), and read the story from the Bible.

Here are some suggestions:

Blessed are the Poor: Jesus' temptation in the desert (Luke 4:1-13)

Blessed are those who mourn: Jesus has compassion on the blind men (Matthew 20:29-34); Jesus mourns (has compassion) for the lost (Matthew 9:35-38).

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice: Jesus dines with sinners (Matthew 9:10-13)

Blessed are the merciful: Jesus forgives the woman caught in adultery (John:8:1-11)

Blessed Pier Giorgio

Listen to the CD on Blessed Pier Giorgio and then briefly discuss how Pier's life reflected the Beatitudes (there is another shorter story of a more contemporary saint after the story of Pier Giorgio - if you have time I highly recommend you listen to this as well!).

Closing

Celebrate the Gifts!

Point out that Blessed Pier Giorgio lived a very full, balanced, happy life because he patterned himself after Jesus. He was always concerned for others before himself. His life was short, but has had great and lasting influence on others. Pier was truly happy, blessed.

Closing Prayer

"O Father, you gave to the young Pier Giorgio Frassati
the joy of meeting Christ
and of living his faith in the service of the poor and the sick;
through his intercession may we, too, walk the path of the beatitudes
and follow the example of his generosity,
spreading the spirit of the Gospel in society.
Through Christ our Lord, Amen."

+Cardinal Giovanni Saldarini,
Archbishop of Turin