

BIBLE STUDY: Sermon on the Mount

by Tommy Moll

Session One: You are Blessed

Opening Activity: Dreamer

Digital option – Use Google Image Search (make sure to check the “safesearch” option) or Pinterest and have youth find images that they would post as their ideal selves. This might include a picture of someone making a touchdown, or someone in a suit looking successful.

Tangible option - Here are very simple instructions from eHow on how to make an ideal life collage: http://www.eshow.com/how_8107176_make-picture-collage-ideal-life.html.

Small Group Questions

(Questions for a group of 3-4 or as a whole group if the group is small or close enough for intimate discussion.)

When you were younger (grade school age) do you recall having any dreams of what you wanted to be when you grew up? What were some of the images that came to mind as you saw yourself as an adult?

How have these dreams or images changed now that you are older? Are you at all sad that some of the dreams of your youth don't seem as realistic now that you've grown up?

Large Group Study

Read Matthew 5:1-16.

Starting at verse 1, who are the characters in this passage? Who is listening to Jesus' message?

What do you think the word 'blessed' means? Does this passage use the word blessed in the way you're used to hearing it?

Another translation for the word “blessed” is “happy.” Assuming that Jesus is talking to you, His disciple, how easy is it for you to be happy when horrible things happen in your life? How would you feel if a friend gave you the advice to “just try to be happy” after you experienced a significant loss?

Take some time to look back through each of the “blessed be” or “blessed are” lines and read through the reasons that you are blessed as a disciple. It seems as if Jesus is saying that you will be blessed sometime in the future for being meek, for hungering for righteousness. What future time do you think Jesus is pointing to?

Is there any way that we are blessed right now when we go through any of the “blessed be” situations? How?

Think of someone who is a powerful leader. Do you picture someone who would be considered a peacemaker? If so, why? If not, why not?

One theme throughout the Sermon on the Mount is that we will not see some of the spiritual blessings in this world because this world is broken. What are some of the blessings we do see right now as a follower of Jesus? How are we blessed right now?

Being a peacemaker isn't easy. Being meek isn't easy. Suffering persecution isn't easy. Jesus reminds us that even if we don't see a reward for our suffering immediately, we will certainly be rewarded for our suffering when He returns. To finish this section, Jesus gives us a beautiful reminder of why we stay faithful to who we are in Christ.

Read Matthew 5:13-16.

If you are the salt and the light in this passage, what do you think God is saying about you? What is your role in this world if this world is bland and dark?

Do you feel like you are salt and light? How can you be reminded this week of who you are in Christ?

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for making me your disciple and for calling me blessed. Help me when I have to suffer in this world to remember that You are with me and that you will never leave my side. Help me to stand strong and share Your Light in this dark world. Amen.

Session Two: Why all the Rules?

Opening Activity: If I Ruled the World

Gather large pieces of newsprint and markers or other writing utensils. Instruct the youth to break up into groups of two or three and work at coming up with rules for an ideal world. Tell the youth that their job is to come up with as many rules as possible to make sure their world runs just the way they want it to. Give groups 5-10 minutes depending on how quickly or slowly they can fill the sheet with rules.

Small Group Questions

What is the most important part of your ideal world (what would you not want someone to change)?

Was it hard to think through all the ways people could potentially mess up your ideal world? If yes, why? If not, why not?

Ridiculous Video Time (optional)

This video gives a comical take on how some people misinterpret Jesus' teachings (especially the Sermon on the Mount): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCTAgxsLE3Q>

Large Group Study

We're going to look at a section of Scripture that could be taken as Jesus pointing out what's wrong with everyone in the crowd listening to His sermon. What's important to remember as you read this next section is that He isn't talking to just a sinner, He is talking to you, a disciple, a follower. Read Matthew 5:17-20.

The "iota" is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet. Jesus is telling us that He is not getting rid of one bit, not even one period, of the law. What are some of the laws or rules you know from the Bible?

Jesus talked about the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. Righteousness could be interpreted as rightness. The scribes and the Pharisees worked very hard to keep all the laws perfectly. It seems as if Jesus is saying that we have to be perfect in order to be a part of His kingdom. Who is the only one who can keep all of the laws in the Bible perfectly?

To understand why Jesus would make it sound as if we needed to be perfect, we need to go somewhere else in the Bible. Read Ephesians 2:4-10.

What is the gift that God gives us in this passage?

According to this passage, what are we created to do?

Here is what Martin Luther has to say about this amazing faith that God has given us: [this would be a great quote for a student to read out loud.]

O, it is a living, busy, active mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them, and is constantly doing them... Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace so sure and certain that the believer would stake life itself on it a thousand times... And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God, who has shown this grace. Thus, it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire.

The Pharisees were very good at flaunting how good they were. They loved to show off at how right they were all the time. How do you think God wants you to show your right-ness?

Read Matthew 5:43-48.

God has made us holy. When He looks at us, He does not see our sin, He sees us as blameless. According to this passage, how are we supposed to respond to those who oppose us, to those who do not know Jesus and want to see us fail?

Think of one person who you have a hard time showing love to and write their name below. Pray that God might help you to show love to even those who don't care about, or would even care to see you fail in your pursuit to follow Jesus.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for the gift of faith. Help me to live out my faith by loving those who would love to see me fail in my efforts to follow you. Help me to love the person I'm thinking of now so much that this person might know Your love through me. Amen.

Session Three: Fruit

Opening Activity: Fruit Samurai

Get a few baskets of fake fruit (Wal-Mart carried these the last time I checked) and a foam sword or a pool noodle. You'll have one person stand in front of the other youth holding the sword. The other youth will sit in front of the youth (at least 8 feet away) armed with the plastic fruit. When you say 'go,' youth will throw up in the air the plastic fruit one piece at a time toward the person with the sword. The person with the sword will try to hit as many pieces of fruit he can. You'll have to have one score-keeper to count how many pieces of fruit get hit. The round is over when all the fruit has been thrown.

Small Group Questions

When is a time you felt you like you were judged unfairly? Example: you got in trouble in class for talking to the person next to you when really the person next to you was talking to you. How did you feel in that situation? How were you able to move on? Did you have a chance to prove your innocence?

Large Group Study

We're going to dig into another tough passage in this session where we're going to need to be reminded that we are God's followers and that He loves us. Read Matthew 7:15-20

What do you think Jesus means in verse 16 when He says that you will recognize a false prophet by his fruit?

What are some false teachings in this world that if we followed them, would be leading us away from Jesus and His teachings?

If false prophets bear bad fruit, and we are to bear good fruit, what does good fruit look like? What does it mean that we bear good fruit?

Read Galatians 5:22-23.

What is the good fruit that followers of Jesus bear?

Read John 13:34-35.

What makes us distinct as Christians, as followers of Jesus? How will people know who we are?

Read Matthew 7:24-27.

What are examples of storms we have to weather in this world (think back to our first lesson and the "blesseds")?

As followers of Christ, we don't merely think about God's Word, or memorize, or recite it—we live it. As wise builders, we build a life on the foundation of God's strong Word. What's one way you can take a teaching from the past three Bible studies and live it out this week?

Read James 1:17.

Without God, we are like shifting shadows, never the same, never reliable, unable to carry out God's commands. We are like the foolish builder without God's love and grace. Instead of leaving us as foolish, God is not like shifting shadows. He is our solid rock. God has not only taught us, He has given us every good and perfect gift, even salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

What are some of the good and perfect gifts that come from God?

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for blessing me with your Word to guide and direct me. Thank you for giving me every good and perfect gift. Most of all I thank you for sending your Son Jesus to live, die, and rise, so that I may have life to the fullest in Him. It's in His Name we pray. Amen.