

✘ **Enriching Faith** ✘

**LESSONS, PRAYERS
AND ACTIVITIES
ON THE TEACHINGS
OF JESUS**

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INTRODUCTION

Faith is the generous gift of a loving God. Nurturing the faith of children is the joy-filled responsibility of parents, catechists, the faith community, and children themselves. Providing assistance for that process is the goal of *Enriching Faith Series: Lessons, Prayers and Activities on the Teachings of Jesus*.

Drawing upon the condensed presentation of Jesus' teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5—7), *Lessons, Prayers and Activities on the Teachings of Jesus* was written to fill lesson resource needs across the curriculum and throughout the catechetical year.

The first page of each two-page chapter welcomes catechists by sharing a well-defined lesson **Objective**, brief **Catechist Background**, and a detailed list of necessary **Materials**. To help catechists create student interest and motivate their participation, a **Lesson Starter** is provided. Directions for the accompanying individual or group **Activity** and a related final **Prayer** complete the outline page.

The second page of each chapter is a reproducible activity sheet that focuses on the words of Jesus where they intersect with the lives of children.

Jesus' teachings found in the Sermon on the Mount were offered for the first time to his disciples. *Lessons, Prayers and Activities on the Teachings of Jesus* attempts to forward those same words to today's disciples. That includes teachers who want the flexibility of activities that can creatively charge fifteen minutes or fill an entire class session, parents who seek reinforcement and clarification for their at-home faith sharing, and especially children who enjoy active and interactive techniques that help them transport Jesus' word off the page and into their lives.

DISCOVERING THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Objective

To help children locate and understand the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5—7, as some of Jesus' most important lessons.

Catechist background

Many of the best-known and most essential teachings of Jesus appear clustered together in Bible verses known collectively as "The Sermon on the Mount." Walking children through the process of finding the Sermon on the Mount and acquainting them with its rich content encourages them to focus attention squarely on the chapters and themes central to all remaining activities in this book.

Materials

- ☐ Book-marked teacher's Bible
- ☐ Black or blue marker and crayons
- ☐ Lesson 1 activity worksheets

Lesson starter

Holding up a Bible, say: *Some of the most important things that Jesus ever taught are found in the Bible in "The Sermon on the Mount." So how do we find that Sermon to learn what it's all about?* (Most young children will not know; older children may already be skilled in finding citations.)

Demonstrate how to locate the Sermon on the Mount by following these simple steps:

- Hold up a copy of the Bible.
- Indicate the small portion of the Bible that contains the New Testament.
- Show the even smaller section that holds the Gospel according to Matthew.
- Draw attention to the very few pages on which the Sermon on the Mount can be found.

Activity

Distribute Activity 1 worksheets, markers, and crayons.

Say: *The numbered squares on the worksheet represent different parts of the Bible that we pass through on our way to finding the Sermon on the Mount. Square (1) represents the complete Bible, so after (1), write "BIBLE." Continue the marking process. Square (2) represents the New Testament. Square (3) represents Matthew's gospel. And Square (4) represents the Sermon on the Mount.*

Choose four different colored crayons. Use your favorite color to shade in Square 4 (the Sermon on the Mount). Use the other crayons to shade the margins of the remaining squares.

In pairs (or small groups), choose and discuss the meaning of any one of the teachings from the Sermon on the Mount listed on the worksheet. Be ready to share what you think the teaching means and why it seems important to you.

Option

Students already skilled in locating Bible passages can start the lesson by finding Matthew 5—7 in their student Bible on their own and then completing the activity page.

Prayer

We thank you, Almighty Father, for your words in your holy Bible. By reading and following the teaching of Jesus, your Son, may we grow in our love for you and for our neighbor. Amen.

Discovering the Sermon on the Mount



**CHOOSE ONE
TEACHING FROM
THE SERMON ON
THE MOUNT ➔**

- Blessed are the peacemakers.
- Blessed are the merciful.
- Ask and it will be given to you.
- Love your enemies.

MEANING AND IMPORTANCE

WHAT MAKES US HAPPY?

Objective

Present an overview that allows children to compare the ordinary paths to human happiness with the Beatitude path Jesus describes.

Catechist background

Most of us experience happiness on a regular basis. We know what makes us happy and what brings a smile to the faces of our friends.

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, in verses called “the Beatitudes,” Jesus asks us to look at happiness from new and unusual perspectives. He encourages us to find eternal happiness in God’s kingdom by living a lifestyle built on these Beatitudes.

By keeping the Beatitudes in mind when they respond to everyday situations, children can practice the Christian way of living and investigate the unique opportunity for the happiness it promises.

Materials

- ☐ Whiteboard or flip chart and markers
- ☐ Six magazine photos of smiling people
- ☐ Lesson 2 activity worksheets
- ☐ Bible

Lesson starter

Say: *Look carefully at each picture I hold up and decide what you think might be causing each person to smile.*

On the board, write “WHAT MAKES US HAPPY.” As you review the pictures, record the reasons given by the students for each individual smile.

These are good reasons for people to feel happy. At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers an entirely different list of behaviors and attitudes that he says can fill us with lasting joy. This is Jesus’ list, which we call the Beatitudes. (Read aloud Matthew

5:3–12.)

Make a second list on the board titled “Beatitude Happiness,” and record an abbreviated, age-appropriate version of the Beatitudes as you read them.

Are you wondering how things like being a peacemaker, showing mercy, or working hard at doing the right thing can really make us happy? The worksheet activity gives you a chance to explore the possibilities.

Activity

Say: *After reading each worksheet case, with a partner discuss and decide which of the two possible answers would best allow you to follow Jesus’ teachings in the Beatitudes.*

Check student answers using the key below as needed. Discuss the reasons behind their decisions and how in each case making “Beatitude” choices would lead to happiness.

Key: 1. (b); 2. (a); 3. (b); 4. (b); 5. (b); 6. (b); 7. (a); 8. (b).

Option

Personalize the “lesson starter” by asking children, in advance, to bring in pictures in which they are the smiling subjects.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for your many gifts that fill us with happiness each day. Help us to find lasting joy in your kingdom by living our lives according to the Beatitudes taught by Jesus. Amen.

What Makes Us Happy?

In each case circle either letter (A) or (B) to indicate which advice Jesus would give you to make you truly happy.

1 You had a wonderful family vacation.

A No reason to thank anyone. You deserved it.

B Thank your parents and thank God.

5 At church you see a “Gloves for the Needy” basket.

A Keep walking. That’s someone else’s problem.

B Check at home for gloves you can give next week.

2 You take candy from the store without paying for it.

A Be really sorry for what you did and pay back the owner.

B Don’t worry about it. It’s no big deal.

6 Your elderly neighbors’ walk needs shoveling.

A Ask them how much they can pay you to shovel it.

B Shovel without pay because they need help.

3 There is a crowd of kids getting on the bus.

A It’s okay to push. You want a good seat.

B Stay in line, don’t complain, and wait your turn.

7 Two of your friends are arguing angrily.

A Say something positive about their friendship.

B Don’t butt in; it’s none of your business.

4 You forgot to study for a quiz at school.

A Copy from someone else’s paper. It’s only a quiz.

B Do your own work, even if you make mistakes.

8 A classmate makes fun of your religion.

A Give him a shove; he’s looking for trouble.

B Ignore him or help him to understand your faith.

BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

When Less Means More

Objective

Explore the meaning of the first Beatitude. Consider how pursuing fewer possessions opens up time and space to discover dependence on God, who alone offers true and lasting happiness.

Catechist background

What does Jesus mean when he teaches that being “poor” is a “blessing”? For children, his words seem a confusing contradiction. Thanks to the daily barrage of exciting new products and the advertising blitz that promotes them, children are easily convinced that buying more and more things, not less, is what will make them happy.

In the first Beatitude, Jesus challenges this attitude and asks us to consider another possibility. What if “less” can actually lead to “more”? The less our lives are cluttered with material goods and the less time we spend pursuing new possessions, the more time we free up for God and the happiness he provides.

Materials

- ☐ Lesson 3 activity worksheets
- ☐ Pencils

Lesson starter

Say: *What’s better—more? or less? Most people would probably say more. Tell me what you would like more of today.*

Write responses on board.

These things are not bad in themselves, but if we spend all our time and energy trying to get and keep more and more things, we run out of time and space for God in our lives. The first Beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit...,” teaches us that sometimes “less” can actually

give us more happiness. With fewer things, we can enjoy the true luxury of having more time for God in our lives.

Activity

Say: *In Part A on the worksheet, investigate the idea that sometimes less of one thing can surprisingly produce more of something else you truly value. Complete the first three examples and then add three examples of your own that show how sometimes less can mean more. Be ready to share your answers.*

When Part A is finished, say: *Part A has certainly showed us that less can give us more. Now let’s think about how to arrange for more time in our lives for God. Under Part B, list three things that having or doing less of will allow you to have more time for God in your life.*

Option

In worksheet Part A, while working on the last three sets of blanks, ask older students to complete the “less” blanks and then exchange sheets and complete the “more” responses on the sheet they receive.

Prayer

Holy God, help us to appreciate the true value of the many good things in our lives. Then teach us to spend less time on things so we can spend more time following you. Amen.

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

WHEN LESS MEANS MORE

Part A

Less **complaining** can = more _____

Less **gossiping** can = more _____

Less **sugar** can = more _____

your examples

Less _____ can = more _____

Less _____ can = more _____

Less _____ can = more _____

Part B

Less _____ can = **more God in my life.**

Less _____ can = **more God in my life.**

Less _____ can = **more God in my life.**