**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Session 1 of 4

# Beatitudes

### MEETING AIM

To think about how God wants us to have a heart more like his.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:1-12

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

Jesus’ heart flows through the Sermon on the Mount. He wants to people to connect with God and it’s like he’s flinging his arms open wide, welcoming us into his kingdom, and inviting us to be more like him. The standards he sets are crazy high, but that’s the point. We can’t do it in our own power. It’s an invitation into relationship and because of God’s grace, it’s possible. The Beatitudes passage is wordy and could be quite hard for little ones to understand, so it’s worth reading it through beforehand and asking God to speak to you for the children in your session.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome each child by name and encourage them to share stories from their week. Celebrate any birthdays, or special events. Ask the children: “What’s something that has made your heart feel happy today?” Thank God that he’s with you and ask him to help you learn more about him today.

### PLAY – 10 mins

**You will need:** ways you can change your appearance (eg hats, glasses, masks, fake moustaches and beards)

Jesus loved speaking to people and teaching them about how to know God more and have a heart more like his. What he told the people was different to what people had taught before, and Jesus was different to any of the teachers that people had listened to before. Explain that you’re going to play a game of ‘spot the difference’. Ask the children to look at you for a minute, then tell them that you’re going to leave the room and change something about your appearance. When you come back in, get them to tell you what’s different. Make the first few easy and let the children have a go too (helping them to make the change if they need help).

If you can get a copy of Hermie: A Common Caterpillar by Max Lucado (Thomas Nelson), then reading this would also work well. God’s response to Hermie that he is making his heart more like his provides a great way into the Beatitudes.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** picnic blanket; eight-piece jigsaw puzzle in the shape of a big heart (make this from card before the session)

Tell the children that people loved listening to Jesus. He travelled around lots from place to place, teaching people all about God. Then tell this story:

One day, Jesus was travelling and huge crowds of people followed him. Jesus might have been tired, maybe hungry, but when he saw all the people he sat down and started talking to them. Jesus loved the people and he wanted them to know how much God loved them and how they could connect with God.

When people listened to Jesus they sat at his feet. *Lay out a picnic blanket and invite the children to sit down on it.* Imagine that we’re all sitting at Jesus feet, listening to him. Everyone is amazed at how he speaks. He’s different to all the other people who teach about God!

Jesus started to tell the people what it looks like to follow God, to be a Christian. What Jesus taught them was kind of topsy-turvy. It was different to what the people had heard before. He told the people how they could be happy in ways they wouldn’t have expected because they could have a heart more like God’s.

Jesus said: “Happy are those who know they need God’s help. (‘Blessed are the poor in spirit’.) *As you say each Beatitude, add another piece to your heart puzzle.*

“Happy are those who know they make mistakes. (‘Blessed are those who mourn’.)

“Happy are those who put others first. (‘Blessed are the meek’.)

“Happy are those who try to know God better. (‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness’.)

“Happy are those who forgive others. (‘Blessed are the merciful’.)

“Happy are those who love like God does. (‘Blessed are the pure in heart’.)

“Happy are those who are kind and make peace with other people. (‘Blessed are the peacemakers’.)

“Happy are those who stand up for God. (‘Blessed are those who are persecuted’.)”

When we follow God, and choose to live our lives for him, our hearts become more like his. It’s like we add pieces to our puzzle so our heart becomes more and more like his. *Invite the children to have a go at the puzzle as you re-read the Beatitudes.*

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, ensuring everyone has the chance to contribute:

* What was your favourite part of the story?
* What do you think it felt like to hear Jesus talk?
* What makes you happy?
* How can we be more like God?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** heart shapes drawn on paper; crayons or felt-tip pens; child-safe scissors

Invite each child to make their own jigsaw puzzle by decorating a heart. As you work, chat about everything you have discovered today. Help the children cut the heart up to make a jigsaw puzzle. Can the children remember some of the Beatitudes as you put the jigsaws back together?

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Gather the children together and say this prayer:

“Thank you, God, that you want us to connect our hearts with yours, and you help teach us how to know you more.”

Choose a Beatitude or two, or invite the children to choose, and spend some time asking God to help you in that specific area eg: “God, we pray that by your Holy Spirit, you would show us when we need your help, and that we would ask you this week when we need help.”

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