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# The Sermon on the Mount , Jesus Teaches Us to Live

*Scripture: Matthew 5:1-16*

**Theme: Jesus teaches us what it looks like to follow Him**

*4th-6th Grade (Ages 9-11)*

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Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: "Jesus Teaches Us to Live Like Him" (Matthew 5:1-16 , The Sermon on the Mount) Introduction (Engage with Wonder): Start by reading Matthew 5:1-3 aloud: "When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down with his disciples." Pause after verse 3 to ask: "What does it look like when Jesus 'blesses' someone?" Write down their ideas on the board, maybe they say things like "good job," "happy," or "peace." Then share that Jesus didn't just say nice things; He taught how to live, like a superhero of kindness! Today, we'll explore His big ideas for how to follow Him every day. --- Key Teachings (Explore the Text): Jesus calls His followers to a different standard, not just "don't do bad things," but "do good things that surprise others!" Read verses 5, 12 together, highlighting the Beatitudes (blessedness statements). For example: - "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (verse 3): Not just sad, but humble, like admitting you need God's help. - "Blessed are the pure in heart" (verse 8): Pure means clean inside, like keeping God's love shining through your thoughts and actions. End with: "Why do you think Jesus calls these things 'blessed'?" (Deeper: "What would it look like to live so kindly others see God's heart in you?") --- Living It Out (Personal Application): Activity: "Kindness Chain" , Give each child a paper chain link and ask them to write one way they can show God's love this week (e.g., "share my toys," "listen when someone is sad"). Tie the chains together and pray: "Lord, help us be like Your light in our family, school, and neighborhood!" Challenge: This week, try one thing from the Beatitudes. For example: - "Beatitude 6: 'Blessed are those who mourn'" (verse 4): Can you help someone who feels sad or lost? - "Beatitude 9: 'Blessed are the peacemakers'" (verse 9): Can you fix a conflict at recess or lunch? Reflection: Ask: "How did Jesus' teaching make you feel? Excited? Scared? What's one thing you're excited to try?" Share with a partner or write down their answer. --- Wrap-Up (Encourage Commitment): Read the end of Matthew 5:16: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Jesus doesn't just want us to talk about Him, He wants us to live like Him! Close with a prayer: "Dear Jesus, help me glow with kindness today. Show me where to shine Your light!" --- Teacher Notes

(Encouragement for Volunteers): - Keep it visual! Use props (e.g., a "light bulb" for verse 16) or act out scenarios (e.g., pretending to "mourn" for a friend). - Embrace mistakes. If a child struggles with the challenge, say, "That's okay! Jesus forgives us too!" - End with energy. Play a song like "Let There Be Peace on Earth" or cheer: "We're Jesus' team!" (Point to the group.) --- Deeper Questions for the Teacher: - How can you prepare them (not just yourself) to handle questions about "why be kind"? - What's one scripture verse (from the Beatitudes) to memorize this week? - How can you pray for their hearts to change as they grow in following Jesus? Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

## Bible Story

The Sermon on the Mount: Jesus Teaches Us to Live Based on Matthew 5:1-16

One morning, Jesus stood on a hill outside of Jerusalem, where many people gathered to listen. He saw them looking at him with curiosity, and he knew they wanted to hear something meaningful. So, he began to teach them, with words that felt like new, golden light in their hearts. "Blessed are you when people insult you," he said, "because they honor you as true followers of God." At first, the crowd gasped, thinking He meant they should be cruel to others, but Jesus explained that He meant they should be kind even when others didn't deserve it. He then talked about humility, "You're blessed when you're poor in spirit, because the kingdom of heaven is yours." The people wondered, "What does that mean?", like how being truly happy comes not from having much but from trusting God in all things.

Jesus went on to say, "Be gentle and kind," even when people hurt you. He even told them, "Love your enemies and pray for those who hurt you," something that sounded impossible to the crowd. "Why should I pray for someone who wronged me?" they asked. Jesus replied, "You can't serve two masters, God and money, or God and pride. Choose one!" He also taught them to ask, seek, and knock, like a little child knocking on the door of God's heart, trusting that He would answer. One of His followers, Peter, asked, "Lord, how many times must I forgive someone?" Jesus said, "Seventy times seven!", meaning always, no matter how many times someone hurt you. That was hard to understand, but Jesus knew forgiveness wasn't just about letting go of anger, it was about trusting God to heal the heart.

Jesus also talked about light and salt. "You are like salt," He said, "that preserves and makes things taste good." But if the salt loses its power, it becomes useless. He meant that God's people should bring hope and goodness to the world, but they must stay pure, just like salt that never turns bitter. Then He said, "Be like little children," who don't hide their light or fear the world. "Don't worry about what people think," He said. "Let your good actions shine like a light, and others will see God's love in you." The disciples wondered, "How do we do this?", especially when people judged them for being different. Jesus answered, "Don't let your heart be heavy. Instead, be lighthearted, full of joy, and ready to serve."

Jesus ended with a powerful question: "Why do you look at the speck in your friend's eye but never see the plank in your own?" He meant that we often focus on others' mistakes while ignoring our own. Then He said, "Make things right with others first," and He promised that if we follow Him, He would "build His kingdom in you." That meant their actions should be like tiny seeds of love, growing and changing the world. The disciples felt overwhelmed, but Jesus reminded them, "I am the Light of the world. Follow Me, and you'll never walk in darkness again."

--- Deeper Questions for Discussion: 1. Why did Jesus say, "Blessed are you when people insult you"? How can we show God's love even when others don't? 2. What does it mean to "ask, seek, and knock"? How can we trust God more in hard situations? 3. Why is it hard to forgive? What does God want us to do instead of holding anger? 4. How can we be like salt, preserving goodness in our world? How can we be light for others?

--- Personal Application: Jesus didn't just give rules, He gave us a lifestyle. When we love unconditionally, serve others, and trust God fully, we become like little beams of His light! This week, try one thing from the Sermon to follow: maybe forgive someone, pray for a friend who's hurt you, or share God's kindness with someone who needs it. Remember: God sees your heart, and He's proud of you for trying! "You are the salt of the earth... light the world!" (Matthew 5:13, 15)

--- Why This Matters: This story shows that Jesus didn't just give rules, He gave hope. His words aren't just about doing good things; they're about being like Jesus. When we live like Him, our lives become a testament to God's love, and that changes everything! Wouldn't the world be brighter if more people followed His teachings? That's what God wants, you to be His light!

## Key Verse

### **Matthew 5:14 , 'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.'**

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." Imagine a little village on a hill, like a cozy neighborhood with houses and maybe even a school or playground. Just think: if that whole village were to disappear, no one would ever see it again, right? But the people in that village do shine bright! Maybe they have a fun festival at the top of the hill, or they help others who live below, or they share kindness like a warm hug. The message here is that just like the whole town can't hide because it's there to be seen, you, each one of you, are special too! Jesus wants you to be like that shining village, making your family, friends, and even strangers feel bright and happy with your actions. Being "the light" means you help others see God's love. Light isn't just something you have, it's something you show. Think about how a flashlight helps someone find their way in the dark: you don't just carry it; you turn it on and share its glow! The same is true for you. When you choose to be kind, share your toys, or help a friend who's sad, you're like a little flashlight for Jesus. You don't have to be perfect, just sincere! Maybe you've already made someone smile with a high-five or a compliment. That's being a light! Why does God want you to shine? God created you for a reason, and one of them is to glow like He does! Just like the sun makes everything around it brighter, when you live with God's love, you make the world around you brighter too. Have you ever noticed how a sunny day makes everything feel happier? That's because the light of God (which you carry inside you) helps others feel safe, joyful, and loved. But here's the question: What if you don't feel very bright sometimes? Maybe you've been feeling sad, tired, or shy. God doesn't expect you to be perfect, but He does want you to try! Even if you feel like a tiny spark, remember: one small light can start a whole big fire! How can you shine today? Let's talk about practical ways to be a light in your own life! Maybe today, you can: - Share your toys with a friend who's sad. - Say "I love you" or "Thank you" to someone who helps you. - Give someone a hug to make them feel happy. - Pray quietly (even just "God, help me be kind today") to ask for His light to shine through you. Here's something even bigger: Jesus says you're a light for the whole world. That might sound scary, but it's also amazing! You don't have to wait until you're older or braver, you can start right now. Maybe you're already doing some of these things without realizing it. The next time someone looks at you and feels a little warmer because of your kindness, that's your light working! **Personal Challenge:** Your Light Starter Next time you feel a little unsure about being a light, try this: 1. Pause and smile at someone, even a stranger, just to remind yourself: I'm made to shine! 2. Write one kind thing you did today (like helping your sibling or laughing with a friend) in your journal. 3. Ask God to help you be brave when it's hard to shine. He'll give you strength! Remember, Jesus didn't make you a light just to be hidden. He made you to soak up the world with His love! So start small, keep going, and watch how your light grows, just like a little seed that turns into a big, beautiful tree. You've got this!

## Activities

### Activity 1:

Students explore Jesus' Beatitudes by creating a "blended blessing" (a mix of one Beatitude and one verse from the Law) and acting out their favorite teaching for a peer.

1. Introduce the Beatitudes (5 mins): Read Matthew 5:3, 12 aloud, pausing to ask, "Which of these 'blessings' feels most surprising or hard to believe? Why?" (Discuss how Jesus flips expectations, e.g., "Blessed are the merciful" vs. "punishing the merciful").
2. Create Blended Blessings (5 mins): In pairs, pick one Beatitude and one verse from the Law (Exodus-Deuteronomy) to blend together. Example: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" + "Honor your father and mother." Write their combined teaching on an index card.
3. Act It Out (5 mins): One student from each pair performs their blended teaching for the group using exaggerated gestures or a 1-second dramatic pause. Peer groups vote: "Which teaching do you wish you could

live out today?"

4. Reflect Together (2 mins): Share one takeaway: "How could this teaching change how we treat someone today?" (Example: "Being gentle" vs. "punishing people for mistakes").

## Activity 2:

Teams test their understanding of Jesus' teachings by debating a hypothetical scenario (e.g., forgiving an enemy) while creating a "Mountain of Values" collage to visually represent their choices.

1. Debate Scenarios (5 mins): Divide students into 3, 4 groups. Assign each a scenario based on a Beatitude (e.g., "Your neighbor insults you, do you retaliate or forgive?" or "A friend takes your snack, do you share or refuse?"). Give 2 mins to discuss, then let a volunteer present their team's stance.
2. Challenge the Debate (3 mins): Ask the group: "Does your answer match Jesus' teaching? Why or why not?" (Example: "Forgiveness is hard because it costs me, but Jesus says love conquers evil.")
3. Create the Mountain (5 mins): Each group designs a "Mountain of Values" using markers and cut-out pictures (e.g., kindness, love, peace) to symbolize their ideal response to the scenario. Label the top of the mountain with their answer.
4. Share & Apply (2 mins): Rotate groups to show their mountain. Ask: "What's one thing you'd change if you saw this design?" (Example: "My mountain doesn't include 'peace' enough because I'm afraid of conflict.")
5. Why These Work:

## Discussion Questions

- Here are four open-ended discussion questions for upper elementary students (ages 9, 11) based on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1, 16), designed to explore the teachings of Jesus while encouraging reflection and personal application:
- 1. What Does It Mean to Be "Salt of the Earth"?
- "You are the salt of the earth... but if the salt has lost its flavor, how can it be made salty again?" (Matthew 5:13)
- Discussion Prompts:
- In the story of Jesus teaching these words, who were the people he was speaking to? Why do you think he chose to teach them here?
- What does "salt" represent in the Bible or in everyday life? How can being a "salt" help people around us, like family, friends, or even strangers?
- Have you ever felt like you lost your "flavor" in something, like being kind, honest, or brave, and wondered how to get it back? How might Jesus' words help you in that moment?
- 2. How Can We Be "Light in the Darkness"?
- "You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14, 16)
- Discussion Prompts:
- Imagine you're walking through a dark forest at night. Who or what would help you see your way? How does being a "light" (like a lamp or a shining star) help others?
- What are some ways you've already been a light in someone's life, maybe by sharing kindness, helping a friend, or standing up for what's right? What made it feel important?
- The Bible says we're called to let our light shine even when no one is watching. How might Jesus want you to be a light today, even in small ways?
- 3. What Does It Mean to Be "Pure in Heart"?
- "Blessed are the pure in heart... for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8)

- Discussion Prompts:
- Have you ever felt like your heart wasn't "pure" because you felt angry, jealous, or proud? What happened after you felt that way?
- How can we keep our hearts clean, like Jesus taught? Maybe it's by forgiving others, choosing honesty, or praying more?
- If you could ask Jesus one question about how to have a heart that truly reflects Him, what would it be? How might His answer change how you live today?
- 4. How Do We Put Jesus' Teachings into Action?
- Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword." (Matthew 5:34, continuing from earlier verses) Then he talked about being salt, light, and pure in heart.
- Discussion Prompts:
- Sometimes Jesus' words feel like rules, but they're really wishes for how we should live. How can we turn these teachings into actions in our daily lives? (Example: Instead of just saying "I'll be kind," we might smile at someone who's upset.)
- What's one way you think Jesus might be calling you to be more like Him this week? Maybe it's helping someone, forgiving a family member, or even just choosing to listen more than you talk.
- Why do you think Jesus used such strong words like "sword" to say we'll face struggles? How can His teachings help us through hard times?
- Teaching Tip: Encourage students to share their answers in pairs or small groups, then discuss as a class. You might also invite them to write down one takeaway from the discussion to share with a parent or friend! Would you like any of these adapted for a specific context (e.g., more focus on forgiveness or prayer)?

## Prayer Focus

*Prayer Focus for Upper Elementary: Living Like Jesus "Dear Heavenly Father, You taught us so much in the Sermon on the Mount, like how to love even when it's hard, to be kind even when we're tired, and to trust You with our hearts. Help us to remember these lessons every day, just like little seeds that need water to grow strong. Give us courage to follow Your ways, even when it's scary or uncomfortable. Teach us to look for opportunities to show kindness and truth, just like Jesus showed us. Amen." --- Reflection Questions for the Class: 1. What's one "mountain" (big challenge) you've faced this week, and how did Jesus' teaching help you handle it? 2. If you could ask Jesus one thing about loving your neighbor or being kind, what would it be? 3. Why do you think God asks us to be like light and salt? How can we share His love in small ways today? Personal Application: "Let's close by giving God a big hug for His guidance. When we feel heavy or slow, remind us: Jesus' words are like a warm blanket for our hearts. Ask Him to help us be gentle, honest, and full of joy, just like the disciples who walked with Him." (Optional extension: Have students share one way they'll "walk on the Mount" today, e.g., forgiving someone, telling the truth, or helping a friend.)*

### >> Missions Spotlight

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches about being 'salt and light.' In many parts of Africa, salt is extremely valuable and light is precious in areas without electricity. Missioners in sub-Saharan Africa find these metaphors come alive in powerful ways.

### -> To the Cross

Jesus said, 'You are the light of the world.' But we can't shine on our own. It's only because Jesus , the Light of the World , lives in us that we can shine. And He could only be our light because He went to the cross to remove our darkness.