

Poor in Spirit

(Matthew 5:3)

Pre-Session Warm Up

Do you like to be happy? What makes you happy? [Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about happiness.] Does candy make you happy? Does the thought of eating chocolate make you say to yourself, “*Oh boy, this will really make me happy*”? [Teacher, give each child a chocolate candy.]

What happens when you swallow the candy and the taste is gone? Is there kind of a letdown? Do you want another candy?

Candy doesn't keep us happy forever, does it? But there is Someone who does.

God gives lasting happiness. Not just laughter and pleasure when everything is going right, but peace and hope that brings joy to you even when times are hard.

Did you know that when Jesus died on the cross, He took the punishment that you and I deserve for all our naughty acts? Now when we die, we can go to Heaven. We don't have to be punished for our sins! Doesn't that give you a deep sense of peace and joy? Doesn't that make you want to please God back for all the wonderful things He's done for you? When we do things that we know please God, it gives us a sense of satisfaction, peace, and joy. Today we begin a series of lessons that will teach us how to please God with our attitudes.

Opening Prayer

Lord, sometimes I wake up in the morning with a bad attitude. But Lord, I know that it ruins my whole day. Teach us this morning how to have a truly happy life. Help us to learn how to have the kinds of attitudes that please You. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 5:3)*

Lesson

Jesus wanted His disciples to know how they could find true happiness. So, He took them up on a mountain, away from everybody and privately taught them what we call *the Sermon on the Mount*. Here's how it starts...

Matthew 5:1-12

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Notice that each verse in this passage begins with the word “*blessed*.” *Blessed* is another word for “*happy*”.

We call this section in the Scripture “*The Beatitudes*.”

[Teacher, lead the children in a discussion about attitudes using the following questions:]

- Do you know what an *attitude* is? (An attitude is the way we show people how we think or feel about something.)

- What makes us have a bad attitude?
- What makes us have a good attitude?
- Do you think God knows about our attitudes?
- What do you think makes God happy?
- Does it make you happy to please God?

There is a special kind of happiness that comes when we know that God is pleased with our attitudes. Jesus wanted us to know how to please God, that's why he gave us the beatitudes. I call them "*Be-Attitudes*" because they are attitudes that ought to be in our hearts.

Let's see what kind of attitudes really please God.

Read Matthew 5:3 and substitute the word "Blessed" with "Happy:"

Happy are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

If this kind of attitude pleases God, let's try to understand what Jesus was saying here.

What does "*poor*" mean? (To be *poor* is to lack something you need. You are "*needy*.") What do you think it means to be *poor in spirit*? (It means you're lacking something spiritually; you're missing something to give you a deep sense of peace and joy in your heart.)

Sin separates us from God. When you realize you are a sinner, you are admitting you are *poor in spirit*—that you have spiritual need; you have a hunger in your heart to make God happy. That's when you are ready to ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins. He is the only one who can satisfy that hunger in your heart to make God happy.

When you ask Jesus to forgive you of your sins, the Scripture says you become a child of God. That's when you know that you can go be with God in Heaven when you die.

That's why this verse says, "*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*"

Knowing that you are *poor in spirit* is the beginning of your walk with God.

It's also important to never forget that we are *poor in spirit*. Always remember that we depend on what Jesus did for us on the cross to be received into Heaven.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we want to live a happy life and we want You to be happy with us. Help us to always remember how much we need You. We want to come running to You when we know we have done something wrong. We want to be quick to confess our sins so that we can be made right again in Your eyes. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Bulletin Board. Use the Bulletin Board idea on the next page and the Bee pattern from page 12. Copy a bee for each child. Talk to the children about the types of attitudes that please God. Let each child write a godly attitude (such as humility, gentleness, desire to do right, compassion, forgiveness, kindness, blameless, peacemaker, etc.) on a bee and mount it on the bulletin board. Add colorful flowers and a decorative border. As an alternative you could make a bee for each beatitude.

Game Center

Hang Man. Play *Hangman* with these words:

- Disciples
- Heaven
- Poor in spirit

- Kingdom of God

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

1. What does the word “blessed” mean? (Happy)
2. What is a beatitude? (A beatitude is the blessing you get from God when you have the kind of attitudes that please Him.)
3. What is the first beatitude? (Matthew 5:3)
4. What does “poor” mean? (You’re needy)
5. What does “poor in spirit” mean? (You’re spiritually needy)
6. Why does it please God when we realize that we are poor in spirit? (We realize our need for Jesus to save us from getting punished for our sins.)
7. What is your reward for knowing you are poor in spirit? (The kingdom of heaven)
8. How often should you remember that you are poor in spirit? (Always, because you should never want to forget how much you need Jesus)

Bulletin Board Idea

