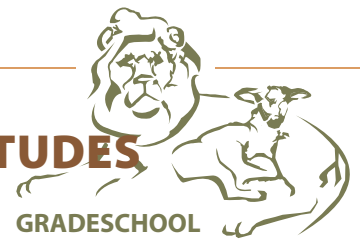


THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT - THE BEATITUDES

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE: MATTHEW 5:1-26



Because of Christ, we can be salt and light to the world

The STORY

Pray with children to start class.

Teaching Points for Class Discussion:

The Character of a Believer – With the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described a meek, humble and merciful people who thirst for righteousness. These people are peacemakers; they are gracious even in the midst of persecution and suffering. This passage describes the character of genuine Christians. In Leviticus 18:3, shortly after delivering Israel from the Egyptians, God instructed Moses to tell the people to be different from the people of Canaan. Instead of walking in the statutes of the pagans, Israel was to follow God's rules and God's ways. Of course, for the most part, Israel drifted from faithfulness and obedience. Jesus spoke of another people in this passage who would be faithful to God's rules and God's ways. Though genuine Christians often fail, they progress toward becoming more and more like Christ. As Christians, we long to live righteous lives because of the new birth, and because of the Holy Spirit's power, we do. The Beatitudes are a banner under which we rally, and in this passage, Christ is holding the standard high. He fulfilled the law for us. Now we look to follow Him by living obedient lives.

The Influence of a Believer – The people of God are to stand out among the nations. We are to be salt, bringing the savor of life to the world. And we are to be light, bringing truth in the midst of darkness. Jesus is the light of the world; His Word is truth. In 1 Samuel 8:19-20 the people complained to Samuel that they wanted a king so they could be like the other nations. This people, who were called to be different from those in the land of Canaan, longed to be like the pagans around them.

As Christians we are to take up once again the charge to be a people set apart for God. No one will notice us if we live sinful lives like the rest of the world. If we live holy, joyful, humble, and merciful lives for Christ, and if we speak of Christ, we will be different from the people around us. We will be like a light shining in the darkness or flavorful salt on bland food.

The Righteousness of a Believer - The Ten Commandments list God's laws and the standard of obedience for believers. Lest a person think he can fulfill the law on his own, Jesus went to the heart of the law in the Sermon on the Mount. He explained that men break the command against murder not only when they kill but also when they become angry. The law requires perfect obedience. Apart from Christ we have no hope to accomplish this. Jesus, however, fulfilled the law and lived a perfectly obedient life. He did not murder and was never sinfully angry. We obey because Jesus gave us a righteous standing, not so we can earn a righteous standing. If we had to be perfect, and then made one mistake, there would be little reason or hope to go on living for God. Jesus lived a perfect life in our place. Even when we fail and become angry at a Christian brother, we can reconcile and get help from God's Spirit to be more righteous next time.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT THE BEATITUDES

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WHERE IS THE GOSPEL?

Please use the following comments connecting today's lesson to the Gospel to help inform your understanding and serve you by aiding your preparation for class. Remember, we want to do more than present disconnected Bible stories and lessons to our young children. We want them to understand how each story in the Bible plays a part in God's greater plan of redemption.

Jesus set a high standard of Christian attitudes and conduct that seems almost impossible to achieve.

Jesus went on to say in Matthew 5:17 that He came to fulfill the law and prophets. Jesus would be the one to fulfill the righteous life He described in the Beatitudes. We need not strive to follow the Sermon on the Mount to earn our way into God's favor. We strive to follow the Sermon on the Mount because we have already been forgiven and made righteous. Now, free of the condemnation of the law, we can follow the way of the law by following Jesus. If we should fall into sin, we need not be condemned. Instead, we confess our sin, and by the blood of Jesus our sins are covered.

Trying to live a perfectly righteous life apart from Christ is not possible. That is why the Pharisees failed. Though they kept a part of the law, they did not keep it all. To fail at just one point is to fail at keeping the whole law. Jesus gives us His righteousness--a perfect righteousness superior to the failed attempts we make on our own.



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ON THE ROAD TO EMMANUS

Read the following Bible passage from the Old Testament. Use the following questions to help the children understand how this passage points to Christ in the New Testament.

Bible Passage: Isaiah 55:1-13

Connecting the passage to Christ:

Jesus addressed the thirsty and hungry, telling them that the answer for their need was found in Him. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, tells us that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be satisfied. In John 6:35 Jesus reveals that He is the bread of life that nourishes our lives. Isaiah foretells a day when all who are thirsty and hungry will be filled by one who will make an everlasting covenant with them. Jesus is the one who fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy.

Questions for reflection:

- What is the "richest of fare" or the rich food Isaiah is speaking of? (Isaiah is not describing any normal food. The Word of God is the food that fills us. The Bible tells us in Deuteronomy 8:3 and Matthew 4:4 that "man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.")
- How should knowing this affect the way we think about reading and studying the Bible? (Just as we would not want to go hungry or thirsty for food and drink, we should not want to go hungry and thirsty for God's Word. Just as we would die apart from food and water, so do our hearts need, and should desire, the nourishment of God's Word.)



THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT THE BEATITUDES

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SWORD BIBLE MEMORY

BE A DOER OF THE WORD

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITIES & OBJECT LESSONS

Use the following activities for practical application and discovery of this lesson. For the younger children, review the preschool questions and use them to help the children relate to the passage. For older children, ask them why they think this passage is in the Bible for us today. How is it supposed to affect our lives?

THE POWER OF SALT

Supplies:

- popcorn
- air popper
- salt (salt packets work well as you can pass them out at the appropriate time)
- bowls (enough for the class.)
- napkins (enough for the class.)

The object of this lesson is to demonstrate the saltiness of salt, setting up a conversation with the class on how and why we are the salt of the earth.

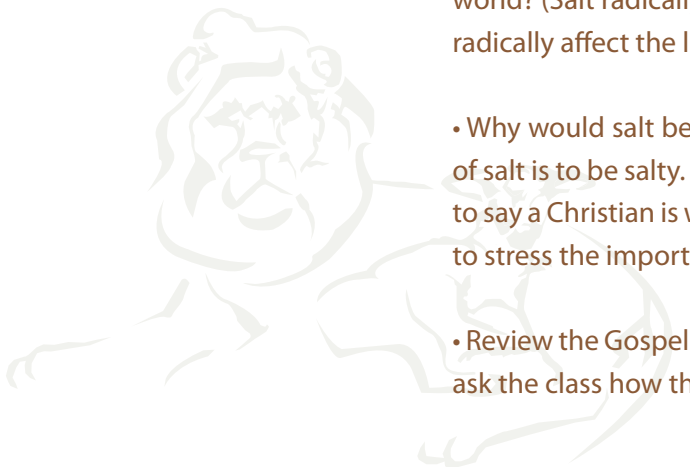
Ask the class if they would like some popcorn. Use an air popper so the popcorn is made without oil and will have a bland flavor. After popping the popcorn pass it out in bowls to the class. Then give half the class salt for their popcorn. While the other part of the class remains saltless, ask the first group just how the salt enhances, or brings to life, the flavor of the popcorn.

Then ask the rest of the class if they would also like to have salt for their popcorn. After they have salted their popcorn draw them out about the way it "brings life" to the flavor of the popcorn.

• Why do you think Jesus use this analogy to describe the affect of Christians on the world? (Salt radically affects the flavor of food. So does the message of the Gospel radically affect the lives of those who receive it.)

• Why would salt be worthless if it were to loose it's saltiness? (The whole purpose of salt is to be salty. If it were to loose its saltiness it would be worthless. This is not to say a Christian is worthless if he or she does not share the Gospel with others, but to stress the importance of sharing our faith.)

• Review the Gospel and how the Gospel is our motivation for living a holy life. Then ask the class how their righteous living would affect those around them who see.



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THE MEMORY GAME

Supplies:

prize for the winning side

Memorize the Beatitudes as a class then have a competition between the boys and girls. Split up the class into smaller groups of 5 boys and 5 girls and give them some time to work on the passage. Tell them that each person must memorize two verses and say them in their proper place. Give the girls and or boys one point each for every verse recited perfectly. Award prizes at the end.

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Supplies:

- 12 flashlights
- large plastic bowl

Read Matthew 5:14-16 to the class

Turn the lights in your classroom out and demonstrate what happens when you place a bowl over a flashlight. Then walk around the class and shine the light in the faces (not too close) of individuals in your class. Help them to see that your light had an effect on them.

Turn on the lights and draw out the children.

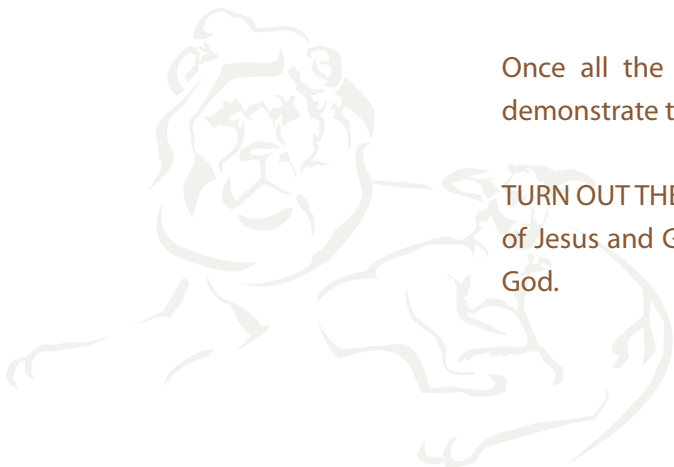
Talk about what kinds of things can cause our lights to be hidden. (Sin in our lives, a reluctance or fear of sharing about Jesus to others, or simply rejecting the Gospel.)

Turn the lights off again

Ask the class for a few helpers who can show a great measure of self-control and who can remember some of the beatitudes and other good works that help our lights to shine bright for Jesus? As kids give answers give them a flash light and have them go up front.

Once all the flashlights are given out then do the following exercise to demonstrate the gospel.

TURN OUT THE LIGHTS. This is the world without the Gospel. Without the cross of Jesus and God's plan of salvation we would be in darkness separated from God.



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The Good News is that God had a plan!!! THE GOSPEL. God sent his one and only son to die on the cross and take the punishment that we deserve and then after 3 days rose again to sit at the right hand of his father. These flashlights represent the work of salvation possible by grace in the lives of these people.

HAVE STUDENTS TURN ON FLASHLIGHTS and let them shine their lights around.

HAVE THE STUDENTS GO BACK TO THEIR SEATS SHINING THEIR LIGHTS

This is the illuminating effect of these Christians living out their lives and sharing the Gospel before others.

Can you see the illuminating effect of their lives next to the shadows of those who do not have lights?

Our lights for Jesus cast out the darkness of sin and can help others see their need for forgiveness and give God glory because of it.

HAVE THE KIDS TURN OUT THEIR FLASHLIGHTS AND GET THE CHILDREN'S ATTENTION and say...

The worst thing we can do is to become like the world or hide our lights for Jesus. This dark world needs our light to shine so that others may come to know Christ. We want others to know who we belong to! So, remember to keep your lights on so that others may see your good deeds and praise your father in heaven.



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JOT AND TITTLE

Supplies:

a page from a Hebrew Bible copied for the whole class, along with paper and pencils for the whole class

This activity will help them to understand the words of Matthew 5:18. This will provide a great introduction to talking about God's law.

Pass out the copy of the Bible page. Explain to the class they are looking at a page from the Hebrew Bible and that Hebrew uses a completely different alphabet than ours.

Explain to them that their task is to make a copy of the page and they should not leave out even one mark. Give them a few minutes and after they realize the difficulty of the task, interrupt them.

Ask them how easy it would have been to miss a mark, then read Matthew 5:17-20. Explain that God in His providence ensured that the Bible was not confused in its transmission to us through the centuries.

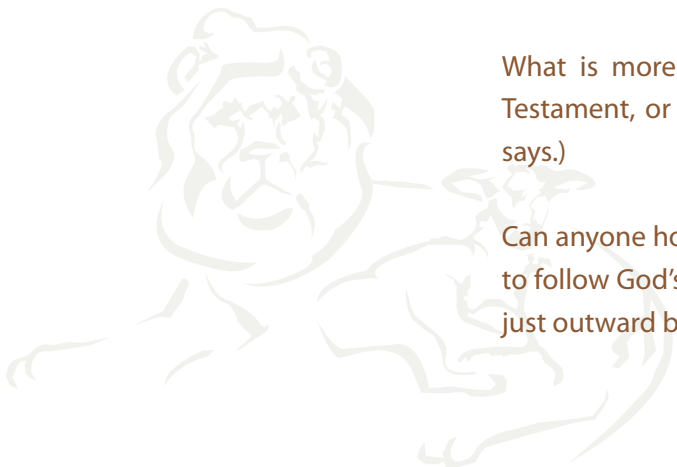
The scribes realized just how crucial it was to perfectly copy God's Word. Should part of the law be compromised or lost, we would not know to follow it. Their diligence in making accurate copies has ensured we have the Word of God today.

Jesus was not referring to the need for accurate copies of the law but to the complete fulfillment of the law. Every stroke of the law must be obeyed and fulfilled for salvation to come. Jesus was the one who fully obeyed or fulfilled the law. He now extends His righteousness to us.

It is hard enough to copy the law correctly but impossible for us to live perfectly. In Christ, we receive His perfect obedience to the law.

What is more difficult, to make a perfect copy of the entire Hebrew Old Testament, or to do what it says perfectly? (It is more difficult to do what it says.)

Can anyone hope to do what it says without mistake? (No. We could not hope to follow God's law perfectly ourselves. Considering that our obedience is not just outward but obedience of thoughts as well, we all fail.)



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PRAYER

Pick several children to pray based on the day's scripture passages.

IN CLASS PROJECT

AN ACTIVITY

Supplies:
pencil and paper

Draw a picture of a light on its stand shining brightly and write the words of Matthew 5:14 somewhere creatively in your drawing.

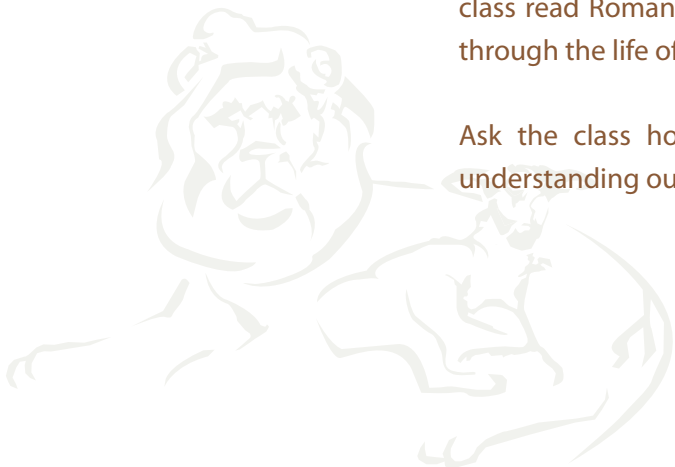
FOR THE OLDER GRADES

Supplies:
pencil and paper

Have the children look up James 2:10 and write out the answer to the following question: What are the implications of breaking even one of God's laws?

The purpose of looking up the James passage is to show just how impossible it is to keep the law in our own strength. If we combine what we learn about the law from Jesus in Matthew 5:21-22, that we need to obey the law in our thoughts, with what James is saying, there is no hope of earning our righteousness through the law. Instead, help your class see that our only hope is through Christ. Have your class read Romans 3:19-24 to learn how God's solution to this problem is solved through the life of Christ.

Ask the class how understanding the difficult requirements of the law and understanding our sinfulness helps us to desire Christ.



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A LITTLE BIT MORE

iota and keraia- When Jesus says not the smallest letter he is using the Greek word iota for smallest letter. We sometimes use this same Greek word in a similar expression when we say, "It won't matter one iota!" When Jesus says not the least stroke of a pen he is referring to the tail of a letter like our lower case "y" or "g". In other words he is speaking of the tail of the letter or the least part (keraia) of the letter. If, for instance, you wrote a lower case "g" simply dropping the tail straight down but not hooking it back all the way to the left it would still look like and read like a "g." Jesus is making the point that the law must be fulfilled even down to the least part.

