

Use Week of:

Unit 23 • Session 1

The Sermon on the Mount

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Matthew 5–7

STORY POINT:

Jesus taught people how to live in God's kingdom.

KEY PASSAGE:

John 14:25–26

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

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Additional resources are available at gospelproject.com. For free training and session-by-session help, visit ministrygrid.com/thegospelproject.

LEADER Bible Study

One of Jesus' most well-known teachings is the Sermon on the Mount. On that day, crowds of people had come to hear Jesus. Jesus went up on a mountain in Galilee, sat down, and began to teach.

Jesus' sermon is recorded across three chapters in the Gospel of Matthew, 5–7, and it tells how believers should live. While Matthew 5:1-2 specifies that Jesus taught His disciples, Matthew 7:28 reveals that the crowds listened to His sermon as well.

First, Jesus began with the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes describe God's great blessings for believers. God's kingdom belongs to the spiritually needy, God will comfort those who are sad, and God will give mercy to those who show mercy to others. Jesus gives believers reason to be glad when life on earth is hard because great rewards await in heaven.

Jesus also taught how believers should live in a world that does not honor Him. Jesus called believers "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-14). He said the good works of His followers should cause others to give glory to God.

God's people had the law of Moses, but some of them—the Pharisees, in particular—were concerned mostly with the appearance of being righteous. They tried hard to look righteous on the outside, but it was all an act. Jesus warned against hypocrites, people who pretend to be something they're not. When a person knows and loves Jesus, he or she has a changed heart that wants to honor Jesus.

As you teach kids Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, emphasize that this moral teaching was not a list of requirements for being accepted by God. Rather, Jesus described what a person's life looks like when that person follows God and lives to honor Him. God's standards remind us that we rely on His grace through the gift of salvation in His Son.

The BIBLE Story

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5–7

Great crowds of people followed Jesus wherever He went. **One day, Jesus** went up on a mountain. He sat down and **began to teach about the kingdom of God.**

First, Jesus taught about the blessings that come to those who follow Him. He said:

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

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

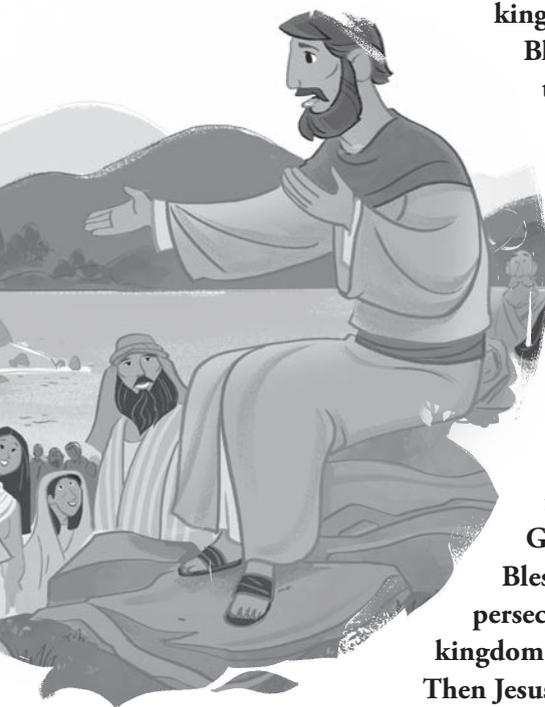
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.”

Then Jesus taught how believers should

live. Jesus said that believers are the light of the world. “Let your light shine before others so that they may see the good things you do and choose to praise God.”

Then Jesus taught about God’s law. Jesus did not come to get



rid of the law, but to obey it perfectly. **He said that to enter heaven, a person can't just look righteous on the outside**—like the religious leaders. **A person must be righteous on the inside too**, obeying God for the right reasons.

Jesus said, “Love your enemies, and pray for them.”

He said, “When you give to people who are poor, give in secret. And when you pray, don't pray just so that people will hear you.” Jesus taught the people how to pray.

He also said, “Forgive others. If you forgive those who sin against you, God will forgive you too. But if you don't forgive them, God will not forgive you.”

Jesus said, “Do not collect treasures on earth, which can be destroyed or stolen. Collect treasures in heaven instead. For where your treasure is, that is where your heart will be also.” He taught that God provides for His people.

Jesus taught the people many things. When He finished teaching, **the crowds were amazed because He taught them like one who had authority.**

Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Use pauses:** As you tell the story, pause between paragraphs or following dialogue to draw kids' attention.
- **Call for active listening:** Challenge kids to count how many times they hear the word *taught*.

Christ Connection: Jesus taught people what it means to follow Him. He taught how people should live, how they should treat one another, and how to love God. People who trust in Jesus live to honor God and show what His kingdom is like.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: The Sermon on the Mount

BIBLE PASSAGE: Matthew 5–7

STORY POINT: Jesus taught people how to live in God's kingdom.

KEY PASSAGE: John 14:25-26

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to talk about things that make them feel happy.

SAY • Feeling happy is nice. Lots of circumstances can make us feel happy. Today, we will learn about something that is deeper than happiness: joy. The Bible teaches us that we can have joy in Jesus even when we feel sad. Does that surprise you? We'll talk more about it soon.

Activity page (5 minutes)

- "What's Inside" activity page,
- 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete the "What's Inside" activity page. Instruct kids to match the cross section of each fruit with the picture of the intact fruit.

SAY • Matching the inside of those fruits to the outside might have been easy for you, but knowing if a person loves Jesus isn't always easy. However, Jesus taught about the way His followers should live. When we truly love Jesus, that love inside of us will change the way we behave on the outside.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: Night watch

Dim the lights in the room. Select a kid to be *It* and provide her with a flashlight. She will stand at one end of the room, facing away from the other kids. While her back is turned, the other kids may sneak forward to reach her. If she turns on her flashlight and points it at the kids, they must freeze in place like statues. If a kid moves while the flashlight is shining, he must return to the start. The first kid to reach *It* wins and takes her place. Play as time allows.

SAY • That was a fun game. Today we will hear about a time Jesus spoke about light. He said that people who follow Him are the light of the world. What do you think that means? We'll find out soon!

OPTION 2: Salt dough

Use the following recipe to make salt dough. Portion the dough out to all the kids and allow them some time to play with their dough. You may choose to invite the kids to taste their dough without eating it.

1. Mix the flour and salt in a bowl.
2. Add the water and mix thoroughly until combined. You may need to add a little more water if the dough isn't coming together. If you wish to add food color, do so now.
3. Knead the dough until it becomes supple and smooth.

SAY • That dough has way too much salt to eat! Jesus taught that those who follow Him are like salt. In the same sermon, He also compared believers to light.

**LOW
PREP**

· flashlight

· Allergy Alert

· flour, 2 cups

· salt, 1 cup

· water, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

· bowl

· food color (optional)

Transition to teach the story

TEACH the Story



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- room decorations
- Theme Background Slide (optional)

Suggested Theme Decorating Ideas: Decorate your space to look like a school classroom. Position a larger desk on the stage, and consider placing two smaller desks facing it. Hang alphabet, science, or math posters around the room. Consider putting a number line along the wall above the desk. You may also display the theme background slide.

Countdown

- countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

- leader attire

[Leader enters wearing business casual attire.]

LEADER • Oh, hello there. I wasn’t expecting any students. Shouldn’t you all be out on break? I suppose it doesn’t matter too much. I certainly won’t hold your desire to learn against you!

I suppose you might be wondering what I’m doing here since school is not in session. Or, if you are like me when I was a youngster, you may just think that teachers live at school. The truth is, I don’t live here, but I do spend a lot of time here even when there are no classes. I have a lot of work to do to prepare

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

things for my students. I hang decorations, plan lessons, and even re-arrange furniture sometimes—all in the name of providing the best learning experience for the kids in my class.

I like to think I'm a pretty good teacher, but the best teacher of all time is Jesus. Would you like to hear some of the wonderful things He taught? [*Coax responses.*] That's great!

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As we begin learning about Jesus' teachings, we will focus on a new big picture question. *What did Jesus teach when He was on earth?* As you listen to today's story, you should get a pretty good idea about the answer. We'll review the answer later.

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review. - Giant Timeline

LEADER • In the beginning, God created the whole universe, and everything was perfectly good. Sadly, things didn't stay good for long. Adam and Eve chose to reject God's authority, and their disobedience brought sin, sadness, and death into the world. Thankfully, God had a plan to rescue people from sin and undo the damage sin causes.

In the last unit, you learned about Jesus' healing of people with all kinds of issues. Jesus healed people who could not walk or could not see; He even raised people who were dead! Although Jesus cared for people's physical needs, He also wanted people to know God. That's why He spent time teaching.

- Bibles
- “The Sermon on the Mount” video
- Big Picture Question Poster
- Bible Story Picture Poster
- Story Point Poster

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Matthew 5–7. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “The Sermon on the Mount.”

LEADER • This story comes from one of the most famous passages in the Bible. **Jesus taught people how to live in God’s kingdom.** Jesus cared not only about people’s physical needs, but also about their spiritual needs. The blessings Jesus taught about were very different from the kinds of things the world usually thinks of as blessings. In a way, God’s kingdom is backward from what the world thinks a kingdom should be.

The religious leaders thought that the key to being with God was obeying all the rules. They thought that if they looked very special and holy, they could earn God’s love. Jesus was teaching the opposite. God loves all of us, but we cannot obey perfectly. Even our thoughts are sinful sometimes.

We usually pay attention to what’s on the outside, but Jesus was teaching that what’s on the inside is just as important. God doesn’t want us to do good things to glorify ourselves but to glorify Him. Without God’s help, we could never honor God with our lives. Thankfully, God sent help.

So, let’s answer our big picture question. ***What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.***

Christ connection

LEADER • Jesus taught people what it means to follow Him.

Note: You may use this opportunity to use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

He taught how people should live, how they should treat one another, and how to love God. People who trust in Jesus live to honor God and show what His kingdom is like.

When we have faith in Jesus, we are part of God's kingdom. That changes everything about us. We begin to look more like Jesus in the way we behave and how we treat others. We love people even when they treat us wrongly, and we care more about God's glory than our own.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 23, Session 1" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about the kinds of treasure there will be in heaven. Guide them to discuss ways they can show God's generosity to others.

· "Unit 23, Session 1"
Questions from Kids
video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Play the "Meet Kesavan" missions video. Lead kids to practice saying Kesavan Balasingham's name (KAY-seh-van bah-lah-SING-hem). Remind kids that churches give to missions to spread the gospel and to help start churches, like the one Kesavan started—Fellowship Church Rouge Park.

· "Meet Kesavan"
missions video

LEADER • Jesus taught people how to live in God's

kingdom. We can learn from the Bible and from other Christians about how to live in God's kingdom.

When Kesavan believed the truth of the gospel, it changed his whole life. Now he lives for God's glory as a missionary! We can live on mission too by loving others and telling them about Jesus.

- Key Passage Poster
- “I Have Spoken (John 14:25-26)” song

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together John 14:25-26. Then sing the key passage song.

LEADER • Jesus knew that it would be difficult for us to remember all His teachings, much less obey them. Thankfully, He sent the Holy Spirit. When we have faith, the Holy Spirit lives with us to help us remember Jesus’ teachings and obey God.

Sing (4 minutes)

- “Just As I Am” song

LEADER • Jesus’ teachings help us see that God loves us while we are still in sin and wants to transform our lives. Everything God does is for His glory and our good, including the ways He helps us know and obey Him.

Sing together “Just As I Am.”

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father, thank You that Your kingdom is not like earthly kingdoms. Help us understand Your Word and obey Your commands. Give us wisdom and courage. Help us love You more each day. Amen.

Dismiss to apply the story

The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



God rules. Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



We sinned. Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



God provided. Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



Jesus gives. Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



We respond. Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now!* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

APPLY the Story



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BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- numbered cube

Assign to each face of the numbered cube a way to read the key passage, such as quietly, loudly, in a deep voice, in a high-pitched voice, in a pirate voice, and in a robot voice. Invite a kid to roll the numbered cube and lead the group saying the key passage in the designated way. Play multiple times, allowing other kids to roll and lead.

SAY • Jesus spoke our key passage to His disciples before He went to the cross. Jesus wanted them to know what to expect. Jesus knew that they would have trouble remembering all the wonderful things He taught about God and God’s kingdom. That’s why Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to help us. He lives within us when we have faith in Jesus, and He helps us understand and remember God’s truth.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970, optional)

Distribute a Bible to each kid. Help kids find Matthew 5. Ask a kid to tell you which book comes directly before and directly after Matthew. (*Malachi and Mark, respectively*) Remind the kids that the Gospels (*Matthew–John*) are the first four books in the New Testament.

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

4. Why did Jesus say those who mourn are blessed?
(because they will be comforted, Matt. 5:4)
5. What did Jesus compare believers to? *(salt and light, Matt. 5:13-16)*
6. What did Jesus come to do with the law? *(obey it perfectly, not get rid of it; Matt. 5:17)*
7. What are some ways God's kingdom is different from worldly kingdoms? *Guide kids to give examples about how God's kingdom is the opposite of what our hearts naturally desire. In God's kingdom, we love our enemies and consider ourselves blessed even in difficult or sad times. We give generously even to those who cannot repay. We trust in God instead of ourselves, and we do good to glorify God, not to look good in front of others.*
8. Why does God care so much about what's in our hearts? *Help kids understand that sinful actions always begin as sinful thoughts and desires. Remind them that it is not enough to simply avoid doing bad things. Obedience to God means we do not even think evil thoughts. Help them see that we need Jesus because only He can meet God's standard of perfection.*
9. Where did Jesus' authority to teach come from?
Guide kids to think about Jesus' identity as God the Son. Remind them that He was present at creation and that He is the King of kings. His words are God's own words. His teaching is perfect.

SAY • Jesus taught people how to live in God's kingdom.

We can only enter His kingdom by faith in Jesus. Then God transforms our lives to look like Jesus. We cannot live the way Jesus said to, but Jesus fulfilled the law for us. We are saved by Him alone.

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

LOW PREP

- “Kesavan Story Cards” printable
- scissors

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

- traffic cones, 4
- foam ball

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Kesavan’s story

Print and cut apart the “Kesavan Story Cards” printable. Distribute the story cards to volunteers. Ask the volunteers to stand in a line and read the statements one at a time. Invite the rest of the group to help the kids rearrange themselves so the cards will be in order.

SAY • Jesus changed Kesavan’s (KAY-seh-vans) life. Instead of hurting other people and living a sinful life, he asked Jesus to forgive him, and he changed the way he was living. Now he teaches other people the same things Jesus did. **Jesus taught people how to live in God’s kingdom.**

OPTION 2: The wide and narrow goals

Use traffic cones to make two goals: one very wide, the other very narrow. Provide a foam ball and instruct the kids to take turns kicking the ball toward one of the goals. Award 1,000 points to any kid who kicks the ball through the narrow goal. Award half a point for each kick that rolls through the wide goal. After a few minutes, announce that now kicking it through the wide goal will result in a loss of points.

SAY • *What did Jesus teach when He was on earth? Jesus taught about God and His kingdom. He taught that all Scripture is about Him.* During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke about two gates, one wide and one narrow. Jesus said the wide gate leads to destruction, and the narrow gate to life. [See *Matt. 7:13-14.*] Jesus was talking about two ways to live.

It is easy to live for yourself and to only do the

things you think you should do, but that way of living does not honor God. It is much harder to live for God's glory and to put Him first, but that is the way to experience God's best for us. When we have faith in Jesus, God forgives our sins and gives us new hearts that love Him. The Holy Spirit comes to help us remember Jesus' words and obey Him.

Reflection and prayer (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper to each child. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or about the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Whom can I tell about this story?

Make sure to send the sheets home with kids alongside the activity page so that parents can see what their kids have been learning.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page provided with this session. Pray for your group.

- pencils and crayons
- paper
- Bible Story Coloring Page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week's *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.