

THE ROAD TO RIGHTEOUSNESS

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

MOURN

HUNGER, THIRST, RIGHTEOUSNESS, BEATITUDES, PROMISE

Biblical reference

Matthew 5:4, 6; Luke 18:9-14

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help the students understand the concepts and meaning of “mourning” (feeling pain) and “hungering and thirsting for righteousness,” according to The Beatitudes because God promises that they’ll be blessed

MEMORY VERSE

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled” (Matthew 5:6, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

Preadolescents conceive faith in different ways. Many see their attendance at the church as an opportunity to be with their friends. Some, who grew up attending church, begin to think, will there be anything more than this? Others still assume that being a Christian is a matter of carefully obeying a list of things that can be done, and avoiding others which are prohibited.

Jesus was clear in teaching that the life of faith is much more than this. Preadolescents are now ready to take responsibility for personally developing their relationship with God. Being what God wants us to be includes a complete commitment to love and obey God. It is the desire, not only to be good as a person, but to actively work in the extension of the kingdom of God here on earth.

Preadolescents are not too young to understand this concept. Rather, if they are not challenged with the real Gospel message, they may end up rejecting the faith because they consider it very simplistic and, therefore, inadequate to satisfy the needs of their lives. This lesson challenges them to seek satisfaction and joy in the commitment to God and the righteousness he desires.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Read Matthew 5:4-6. Sometimes we do a good job of hiding our true needs, hiding them in some ways that may be good, but ultimately make us forget that only in God can our lives have meaning and fulfillment.

The first step in going to God is to “mourn” (or feel pain). This includes the penalty for our sins and repulsion for the sin that infects the entire world. Even in the midst of this sorrow, there is comfort because God sent a Savior who forgives our sins. One day, the Lord will destroy all his enemies.

The word “righteousness” has many meanings. First, it is to be in proper relationship with God. But verse 6 covers two other aspects: personal righteousness, that is, doing what God diligently asks. And social righteousness, or the desire that all people experience what is just and right. Therefore, we are not content with just one type of righteousness, we must yearn for both.

To better understand the concepts “hunger” and “thirst” we must place ourselves in the time of Jesus. At that time, the daily salary was barely enough to avoid dying of starvation or hunger. Finding clear and drinkable water was also very difficult, and the weather was hot and dusty. When Jesus speaks of “hunger” and “thirst” here, he refers to the appetite and thirst of those who are desperate for some food or who will die if they do not drink some water soon. Thus seen, this is a request, a challenge and a demand. How much do we really want righteousness? Do we crave it as much as someone who is dying of hunger or thirst?

Read Luke 18:9-14. These verses show the difference between the desire for internal righteousness and piety and external hypocrisy. That difference is not always clear in our lives. The Pharisees were people who honestly tried to follow God with all their hearts. Actually they were an example of a warped spirituality in their culture. Sometimes, what looks good on the outside may not be so on the inside.

The key to understanding this passage is how we choose to approach God. The prayer of the Pharisees was a list of their good works and comparisons, which they made among themselves and with others, to appear good. But, the publican’s (tax collector) prayer showed a deep recognition that he desperately needed God. He cried out for mercy.

When we approach God, it must be with a deep awareness of our need for grace and forgiveness. Trying to prove our dignity and worth through works, comparing ourselves to others, makes us worse sinners. And using prayer to try to convince God that there is something good in us is not what he wants. But, presenting ourselves to God, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, guides us to receive his provision.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

Important words

Write the important words and their meanings on cardboard cards.

Mourn: feel deep pain for the sins committed, and for all the sin and evil in the world.

Righteous: it means being in right relationship with God and obeying him.

Righteousness: He who seeks it is righteous and fair in thoughts, words and actions. It also includes the desire that all people experience what is good and fair.

Upon arrival of the students, place the important words on the mural. Give examples of each. You can use them to organize competitions with the preadolescents in your group for them to get acquainted with the words.

Lunchroom stories

Pass out Student Activity Sheet #410-A (Lunchroom Stories). Say: “In the student activity sheet, you’ll find three scenarios that show three possible ways to satisfy one’s hunger and thirst.” Ask the students to act out the scenes.

Which of these methods to satisfy hunger and thirst do you think is the best? (None of the methods shows the correct way to do it.)

What do you think is wrong with these ways of satisfying hunger and thirst?

If you were to talk to other children, what would you say about satisfying their hunger and thirst? (Making rude jokes do not help them when they’re thirsty or hungry; do not speak; it is not important to satisfy your hunger and thirst; do not worry, you can endure hunger and thirst, etc..)

Comment: “Humanly speaking, we all have the need to satisfy our hunger and thirst. But there is another kind of hunger and thirst that human beings suffer from, and that is spiritual hunger and thirst. In today’s Bible story, we’ll learn about how to meet those needs with the approval of God.”

I feel this way when I'm hungry and thirsty

Write this phrase, "I feel this way when I'm hungry and thirsty", twice on the board, once on the right and once on the left. Divide the group in two. All the students are to think about how they feel when they're hungry and thirsty, and one at a time, and write those feelings on the board. When finished, compare the lists.

Comment on how difficult it is when we feel hungry. Ask the students to tell about a situation in which they suffered hunger or thirst. (Start by telling them about one of your experiences.) How did they feel?

Say: "Going hungry and thirsty is not a pleasant experience. When we're hungry, we want to eat and satisfy our stomach over and over again. When we're thirsty, we desperately want to drink water. Our Bible study talks about a certain way of being hungry and thirsty. We'll discover how to meet those needs. As we study the Word of God, remember that we're talking about feeling hungry and thirsty.

Distribute Student Activity Sheet #410-B and #410-C.

TEACH THE LESSON

Important words

Before beginning the Bible study, explain to the students that there are some terms they need to know to understand what the Bible tells us. Those words are in Matthew 5:4 and 6. One is "mourning", which is synonymous with pain or sorrow; others are "hunger and thirst"; and the last is "righteousness." (If you are making a mural, place the words on it.)

Ask if the students know the meanings. Add your comments.

Explain: "Mourning", in Matthew 5:4, is to feel a deep pain for our sins, and for all the evil that exists in the world.

In Matthew 5:6, "hunger" is what people feel when they lack food.

"Thirst" is the desire we feel when we have nothing to drink.

"Righteousness" is the good that results from a proper relationship with God to do his will.

Say: "Keep these words in mind when we talk about our Bible story."

The Pharisee and the tax collector

Ask a volunteer to read the Bible story based on Luke 18:9-14. Ask the volunteer to be expressive in doing so. Clarify: "These two people were hungry and thirsty for spiritual things. They both wanted to receive God's approval. They both wanted to have the peace and joy that's received from the Lord, though they did it in different ways. We'll discuss who did better and why."

The Pharisees were a group of men who were devoted to God and had pledged to fulfill his law. They knew the Scriptures forwards and backwards. But many times they prided themselves on their position.

Another group of men was the tax collectors who worked for the Roman government. They charged a much higher amount of taxes than what they should charge, and then they kept part of it for themselves. The Jewish people considered them traitors.

One day, a tax collector and a Pharisee went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee, stood by himself and prayed: "God, I thank you that I'm not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get."

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but he beat his chest, saying: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

No one was impressed by the tax collector's prayer. Everyone wanted to be like the Pharisee, not like the tax collector.

But Jesus thought differently. To everyone's surprise, Jesus said, "I tell you that this man (the tax collector), rather than the other (the Pharisee), went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Generate a debate on the following questions.

What did the Pharisee do that was wrong? (He bragged about himself. He implied that he was the righteous one, and that the tax collector was the thief, the unrighteous one.)

What would the Pharisee think if he had heard Jesus say that he was wrong and that the tax collector was right? (He would not have believed what Jesus was saying. Possibly he would have been bitter and angry because he was sure he was righteous. He

would surely have been annoyed a lot with Jesus.)

What was the correct attitude of the tax collector? (He was humble before God. He quickly admitted that he was a sinner and needed the help of the Lord. (Beatitude #1, Matthew 5: 3). He felt pain / mourned for his sins (Beatitude #2, Matthew 5:4). He was “hungry” for righteousness, forgot his pride and asked God to help him. (Beatitude #4, Matthew 5:6).

How can we, as Christians, have an attitude that is more like the tax collector and less like the Pharisee? (Try to live as the Beatitudes teach us: be humble, be mournful for our sins, and be hungry and thirsty for the righteousness of God.)

Ask if the students can quote Matthew 5:6. (“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled,” NIV).

Say: “Jesus promised that if we’re hungry and thirsty for righteousness, he’ll help us to be satisfied. Besides, if we feel real pain for sin and we desire righteousness as we have talked about, our righteousness will increase. That way our joy will grow, knowing that Christ forgives us and approves of what we do. All this will give us the assurance that when Christ returns, he’ll find us faithful and righteous.”

CONNECT THE LESSON

Game and review

Form a circle with all the students. Bring a soft ball or small bag full of seeds or sand to the session. You’ll stand in the center of the circle, throw the ball/ bag gently to a student and ask some of the questions below. You should have studied them in earlier. The one who does not know the answer will have to leave the circle and find and read the answer in the Bible. Once they know it, they’ll raise their hand and ask permission to return to the circle, repeat the question with their answer, and return to the game.

Questions:

Who are the characters in the story? (The Pharisee and the tax collector)

What were these two men looking for? (God’s approval, inner peace, to satisfy their spiritual hunger and thirst, to be righteous)

How did the Pharisee seek God’s approval? (He let God know how “good” he was; he compared himself to the tax collector; he regarded the tax collector with contempt.)

How was the tax collector searching to be righteous? (With pain and humility he confessed his sins to God and asked the Lord for help.)

What prayer was pleasing to God and why? (The tax collector’s prayer, because he recognized his need, felt pain for his sins, and depended on God to receive mercy and salvation.)

Say one of The Beatitudes in which the Pharisee failed. (The 4th that we have studied.)

Say one of The Beatitudes by which the tax collector lived. (1, 2, or 4)

What does “to mourn” mean? (To feel pain for our sins and all the evil in the world.)

What kind of comfort does God promise to those who mourn? (The comfort of knowing that Jesus forgives sins and that one day he’ll take away all evil.)

What is “righteousness”? (Being in good relationship with God and doing what he likes. That includes trying to help other people be righteous.)

What does it mean to “hunger and thirst for righteousness?” (To want to do God’s will with all your heart and seek his help to achieve it.)

What did Jesus mean when he said: “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they’ll be filled”? (They’ll be more and more righteous, filled with his presence, joy, peace, etc.)

Picture: Blessed are the...

Distribute crayons, poster board, stickers, glue, etc. Direct the group to Student Activity Sheet #410-D (Blessed are those ...). Ask the students to color it to take home and hang it on a wall in their room. If they wish, they can stick it on a piece of cardboard of the same size, so that it is firmer. Say: “This will remind you that we’ll be filled with spiritual blessings. This is a promise from the Lord to all who seek it. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled (Matthew 5:6).

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

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You already have the memory verse on the 13 cards from the last session. Before this session, hide the cards in different places in the room. Write the passage on the board for review. Ask the students to look for the cards and assemble the puzzle. You can give small prizes.

WRAP-UP

Pray

End the session with an invitation to those who wish to seek the righteousness discussed in the lesson. No doubt there will be willing hearts that are hungry and thirsty for righteousness. Ask the Lord's direction for your students, and for you to guide this invitation.

If there are students who accept the invitation, ask for the help of another teacher or assistant to let them out, so that they can talk and pray quietly after they're dismissed from the group. Pray for the students, for Jesus to continue shaping their willing hearts.

Encourage

Encourage the students by ending the session with an appropriate chorus or hymn.

Invite

Say something interesting about the next session to encourage attendance. Tell them that visitors are welcome.