I need God's help

Grades 1–5 • 60 minutes • Matthew 5:1-3; Luke 18:9-14

What children are learning

Jesus says the kingdom of heaven belongs to people who know they need God. Children will practice asking God for help in their own words, as the tax collector did when he asked for mercy.

Before class

For you. Mark Matthew 5:1-3; Luke 18:13-14 and the memory verse, Matthew 5:3, in your Bible. Keep the teacher pages and your copy of page 7 beside you.

Print before class. Keep teacher pages 1–4 in order. Print page 7 (the activity sheet) for each child and for yourself, page 5 (the Student Page) for each child, and page 6 (the Family Connection) for each household.

For the table. Have a Bible and the printed pages ready. One half-sheet of plain paper and a pencil or crayon per child. Fold a sample half-sheet into a little book before class.

Words children may ask about. Poor in spirit means knowing we need God. Mercy is kindness God shows us when we need forgiveness. God’s kingdom is life with God as our King.

Teach with care. Poor in spirit describes depending on God, not a child's worth or family finances. These blessings describe life in his kingdom as a gift of grace rather than a way to earn salvation.

A note for the teacher. This outline is here to help you prepare and teach. As you teach, feel free to adjust the pace, change an activity, or spend more time on a child’s question as the Holy Spirit leads you.

When the children arrive, begin on page 2. Teach pages 2–4 in order.

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0–5 min · Welcome the children

Begin. Close your hands as if you are holding something tightly. Ask, “If someone offered me a gift, what could I do with my hands?” Open your hands. Say, “Today Jesus tells us about people who know they need something only God can give.”

5–10 min · Worship and opening prayer

Worship together. Sing a familiar song of praise. If you are leading without music, invite each child to finish “God, thank you for…” aloud or quietly.

Pray. God, thank you for bringing us together. Help us hear what you want to teach us today. Amen.

10–23 min · Open the Bible together

Lead into the reading. On a hillside Jesus told people who belongs in God’s kingdom. Then we’ll hear the short prayer of a man who knew he needed God’s mercy.

Read aloud. Read Matthew 5:1-3; Luke 18:13-14 aloud. For more than one passage, pause briefly between readings so children can find their place.

Background for you. Use these notes if the class needs help with the reading.

Jesus sat down on a mountainside and began teaching his disciples. His first blessing sounds surprising. The kingdom of heaven belongs to people who are poor in spirit.

A person can have plenty to eat and still be poor in spirit. Jesus is talking about someone who can say, “God, I need you.” We can be glad of what we do well and still come to him for help.

In another story Jesus told, a tax collector stood at a distance and asked God for mercy. Jesus said he went home right with God. He could come honestly, just as we can.

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23–31 min · Talk about what you heard

Ask. What did the tax collector ask God to give him?

Listen for. He asks God for mercy because he knows he has done wrong.

Keep talking. Jesus says the man went home right with God. What does that tell you about the way God hears an honest prayer?

Connect to Jesus. Jesus welcomes people who know they need God. We can come to him with the few words we have today.

31–47 min · Prayer book

Give out the materials. Give each child page 7. Read its printed headings together: God welcomes me, I can ask, I can accept help. Leave the sheet where children can point to it as they work.

Try it together. Show your folded book. Give everyone a half-sheet and have them bring the short edges together. On the cover trace two fingers or write “Help.” Open the book. Model a prayer a child might use before a difficult conversation: “God, help me tell the truth.” Let children add words, a drawing or a prayer in their thoughts. Lay the book beside “I can ask” on page 7.

For younger children. Fold the paper together. Offer to write “Help me” while the child names or thinks of a request.

For older children. Invite an older child to explain how the tax collector’s prayer could help someone who finds it embarrassing to ask for help.

Tidy up. Give a one-minute warning. Put away shared supplies. Keep each child’s work and page 7 together for dismissal.

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47–51 min · Give children a moment to respond

Offer the student page. Hand out page 5, the Student Page. Read “Try this” aloud. Children may speak, write or draw, or choose the “My reminder” box. Use one box. Let an unfinished page go home.

51–55 min · Remember a verse

Read and echo. Read Matthew 5:3 from your Bible. Children may open their hands when they hear “poor in spirit.” Read it again in short phrases the children can echo.

55–60 min · Take it into the week

Ask. If someone thought they had to impress God before they could pray, what would you tell them?

Pray together. Lead the children in a prayer about what they learned today.

Example prayer. Father, we need your grace and wisdom. Thank you for welcoming us through Jesus. Help us receive your help.

At the door. Send home each child’s activity and page 7. Give page 6, the Family Connection, to each household.