

UPSIDE DOWN

JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT



UPSIDE DOWN

MONTHLY PREPARATION GUIDE

UNIT 1 – ELEMENTARY

God has called us to live UPSIDE DOWN lives. When the world around us tells us that we should look out for number one, that it's better to have more of, well, everything, Jesus teaches us the opposite. In His Sermon on the Mount, **Jesus teaches us God's way**. This unit dives into Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where He teaches us that God blesses the poor, the humble, the pure of heart. We learn that we should love our enemies instead of hating them. We find that God wants us to give in secret, not with fanfare. Finally, we discover that our treasures should not be the things of this earth. The things we hold most dear should be things that have eternal value, things that build His Kingdom. This month's UPSIDE DOWN lessons teach kids how **Jesus teaches us God's way**. And God's way is always the best way! Our Focus Verse wraps it up nicely, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

WEEK 1

LESSON MATERIALS: Puzzle Piece, *People Pinners*, Masking Tape, Poster Board, Wall-Safe Tape, Blindfolds, Pencil or Pen, Poster Board and Markers (Optional), *Beatitude Wings*, *Bee Body*, Glue Sticks, Scissors, Markers or Crayons

WEEK 2

LESSON MATERIALS: Puzzle Piece, Large Mason Jars, Masking Tape, Clothespins, 2" Construction Paper Hearts, Glue, *Love Your Enemies Wristbands*, Cardstock Paper, Heart Stickers, Tape, Markers or Crayons

WEEK 3

LESSON MATERIALS: Puzzle Piece, Pool Noodles, Tarps or Blankets, Hula Hoops, Masking Tape, Chairs, PVC Pipes (Optional), Plastic Money, 6" Felt or Fabric Squares, Ribbon, Paper, Markers

WEEK 4

LESSON MATERIALS: Puzzle Piece, *Treasures Page*, Small Bug Stickers, Markers or Crayons

THE BEATITUDES

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:1-10 (NLT)

BIG IDEA

Jesus teaches us God's way.

FOCUS VERSE

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

LESSON MATERIALS

| Puzzle Piece | *People Pinner*s | Masking Tape | Poster Board | Wall-Safe Tape | Blindfolds | Pencil or Pen | Poster Board and Markers (Optional) | *Beatitude Wings* | *Bee Body* | Glue Sticks | Scissors | Markers or Crayons |

GREET — 15 MINUTES

Connection questions to ask as the children arrive:

- If you could buy one thing from the store today, what would you get? Why?
- What are some ways God has blessed you?

WORSHIP — 10 MINUTES

While we have a lot to teach our students about worship, we can learn from them too. Pay attention to how your kids worship and praise God. Ask the Lord to show you what these children can teach you.



GOOD LEADERS ARE ROLE MODELS; BUT GREAT LEADERS ARE WILLING TO LEARN FROM THOSE AROUND THEM—EVEN FROM CHILDREN.

PRAY — 5 MINUTES

Gather everyone for prayer.

SAMPLE PRAYER: *“God, help us focus our attention on You. We believe that You are here with us as we read and learn about the Bible. Prepare our minds for what You want to teach us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Your Son, Amen.”*

REVIEW — 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece |

BACKGROUND: Say, “Last month, we learned about Jesus’ birth and how people welcomed His arrival with jumping for joy, worship, lifting Him up, and gifts. That was a fantastic series, but I am also excited about this month because we have new, incredible lessons called Upside-Down. Can someone tell me what ‘upside-down’ means? [Wait for responses.] Yeah! When something is ‘upside-down,’ it is backward; it is reversed; it is not normal; it is upside-down! For the next four weeks, we are going to read about some of Jesus’ teachings that seem surprising—even crazy to some people. Jesus teaches us about an upside-down world. Are you ready to hear what His world is like? Great! Who would like to stick this month’s first puzzle piece on the wall?” Have a child put the puzzle piece on the wall.

TRANSITION: Say, “Let’s play a game that will help get us ready for our story!”

ENGAGE — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *People Pinner*s (1 per child) | Masking Tape | Poster Board (Optional-1 per class) | Wall-Safe Tape | Blindfolds (1 per class) | Pencils or Pens (1 per class) |

Say, “Today, we are going to play a game I like to call, *Pin the People on the Mountain*. Has anyone ever played *Pin the Tail on the Donkey*? Great! Well, this game is like that, except we will pin people to the top of a mountain instead of tails to a donkey! Who’s thinks they can do it?”



BEFORE CLASS BEGINS, CUT OUT THE PEOPLE PINNERS (ONE FOR EACH CHILD) AND USE MASKING TAPE TO MAKE A MOUNTAIN OUTLINE ON THE WALL OR DRAW A MOUNTAIN ON A POSTER BOARD.

GAME GOAL: To place a People Pinner as close to the mountaintop as possible.

HOW TO PLAY:

- Before beginning the game, make a mountain on the wall using masking tape or tape up the mountain poster to the wall (eye-level with the kids). Additionally, give each child one People Pinner.
- Have the children write their names on the front of their People Pinner before beginning.
- Line up the children about ten feet away from the mountain poster.
- Starting with the first person in line, stick a piece of wall-safe tape to the back of every People Pinner.
- Next, blindfold the child, spin them around three times, and have them attempt to stick their People Pinner to the top of the mountain.
- Once the People Pinner is placed, that child will take the blindfold off and see where their People Pinner landed.
- Repeat the process until each child has had a turn. The winner is the person who gets their People Pinner closest to the top of the mountain.

TRANSITION: Say, “Great job pinning your people to the mountain! Do you know why we played this game? Well, we are about to read an upside-down teaching by Jesus where He taught on a mountain! Can you imagine learning on top of a mountain? It must have been a pretty special time, right?”

LEARN – 15 MINUTES**MATERIALS:** | Poster Board and Markers (Optional) |

BEFORE THE LESSON BEGINS, YOU COULD WRITE DOWN THE BEATITUDES ON A POSTER BOARD SO EVERYONE CAN REFERENCE THEM WHILE YOU'RE READING AND DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE.

Say, "In today's story, Jesus was about 30 years old, and the time had come for Him to speak to the world. On this important day, He chose to teach His people on a mountain! We call this teaching His 'Sermon on the Mount.' [Discuss the words 'sermon' and 'mount.'] This 'Sermon on the Mount' was Jesus' first sermon, but He didn't teach what the people expected. In fact, it was very upside-down; it did not make much sense to His listeners. Now, let's read the first part of Jesus' teaching, called 'the Beatitudes.'" Read Matthew 5:1-10 (NLT).



WHILE READING THIS STORY, PAUSE AFTER A FEW BEATITUDES AND ASK THE CLASS, "DOES THIS SEEM RIGHT? WHAT IS SURPRISING ABOUT JESUS' WORDS? THIS IS SO UPSIDE-DOWN!"

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ² and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

³ "God blesses [has kindness on] those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

⁴ God blesses those who mourn [saddened], for they will be comforted.

⁵ God blesses those who are humble [self-forgetful], for they will inherit the whole earth.

⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice [goodness], for they will be satisfied.

⁷ God blesses those who are merciful [kind], for they will be shown mercy [kindness].

⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure [clean or good], for they will see God.

⁹ God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted [wronged or mistreated] for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs."

Say, "**Jesus teaches us God's way!** Do you remember hearing the word 'blesses' over and over in our passages? How many times did Jesus give blessings? [He says it eight times.] It must be pretty important if Jesus says it that many times.

Ask, "What do you think 'blesses' means? [Wait for responses.] It means God shows an extraordinary kindness to these people and that these people will be the happiest of all people because of God. Wow! Does Jesus say that the most important, the most powerful, or the most famous people are the most blessed? No, He doesn't! **Jesus teaches us God's way**, and God's way is to bless the people who seek Him

and are trying to be like Him. [Reread the Beatitudes if necessary.] God wants us to know that His way [His Kingdom] is an upside-down world where His ways are better than our ways."

TRANSITION: Say, "Aren't you grateful **Jesus teaches us God's way?**"

DISCUSS – 10 MINUTES

Discuss the story: Say, "Let's see what you can remember about today's story."

1. Jesus taught us a better way. Whose way does Jesus teach us to follow?

Response: **Jesus teaches us God's way.**

2. Which blessings seem most upside-down to you?

Response: Answers will vary.

3. Why do YOU think Jesus started His 'Sermon on the Mount' by telling us who the people are that God blesses?

Response: Answers will vary.

4. What made God's blessings upside-down?

Response: We usually think that people who are rich, famous, or powerful are the most important, but that's not how God works. God blesses those who love Him. You can be rich or poor, powerful or powerless. It doesn't matter as long as you love and follow Jesus.

5. If someone asks you what the Beatitudes are, what will you tell them?

Response: Answers will vary. Beatitude is the state of great joy. Living God's way is the only way to have true and great joy in our lives.

6. We need God's help to be the kind of people Jesus describes in the Beatitudes. Is there a Beatitude you want God to help you live more fully? (Share an example from your own life to help the children with this answer.)

Response: Answers will vary.

7. What do we learn about Jesus in this teaching?

Response: **Jesus teaches us God's way**, Jesus teaches upside-down ways, Jesus is a great teacher, Jesus blesses the people who love Him, etc.

TRANSITION: Say, "This has been a great discussion! Thank you for helping me answer these questions. Now, let's work on a craft that will help us remember 'the Beatitudes' and how **Jesus teaches us God's way.**"

RESPOND – 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *Beatitude Wings* (1 pair per child) | *Bee Body* (1 per child) | Glue Sticks | Scissors | Markers or Crayons |

Say, "For today's craft, we will create a Beatitude Bee. Can everyone say that with me? [Say it together.] Great! The wings of our bee will have the Beatitudes written on them to help you remember them. Who is ready to make their bee?"

- Give each child a pair of *Beatitude Wings*, a *Bee Body*, a glue stick, scissors, and markers or crayons.
- First, instruct the children to cut out the wings and *Bee Body*.
- Next, have them color the bee, and then glue the wings to the *Bee Body*.
- Lastly, read the *Beatitude Wings* with the class.



USE THIS ACTIVITY TIME TO CLARIFY THE BIG IDEA AND ENSURE THAT THE KIDS UNDERSTAND WHAT THE BEATITUDES ARE.

TRANSITION: Say, “Great job making *Beatitude Bees!* Remember, **Jesus teaches us God’s way**, and He used the Beatitudes of blessings to do that.”

MEMORIZE – 5 MINUTES

Say, “Our memory verse for this month goes right along with Jesus’ ‘Sermon on the Mount.’ Listen closely to the words God says in this verse.” First, read the verse multiple times, and then have the kids repeat the verse after you.

“As the heavens are higher [arms up] than the earth [arms down], so are my ways [point a finger toward heaven] higher than your ways [point a finger toward yourself] and my thoughts [point a finger toward heaven] than your thoughts [point at your own head].” Isaiah 55:9 (NIV) (hold out hands like a book)

CHALLENGE: Talk about what the verse means. Here are some questions to get you started:

1. What do you think the word ‘ways’ means? (God’s “ways” are God’s acts, deeds, or teachings/laws.)
2. Why are God’s ways higher (or better) than our ways?
3. What does this verse tell you about the kind of God we serve?

REFLECT – 5 MINUTES

Say, “Jesus surprised everyone with God’s upside-down blessings—the Beatitudes. God’s ways are not like Earth’s ways; they are so much better! This week, let’s ask God to make us who He wants us to be. Before we pray together, we are going to be quiet and ask God to show us how He wants to help us become more like His Son, Jesus. Remember, **Jesus teaches us God’s way**, which is always the BEST way. Let’s pray!”



PAUSE AND LET THE CHILDREN PRAY SILENTLY, THEN BEGIN THE CORPORATE PRAYER TIME. AND ALSO TALK ABOUT HOW HE LOVES THEM UNCONDITIONALLY (NOT BASED ON WORKS OR PERFORMANCE).

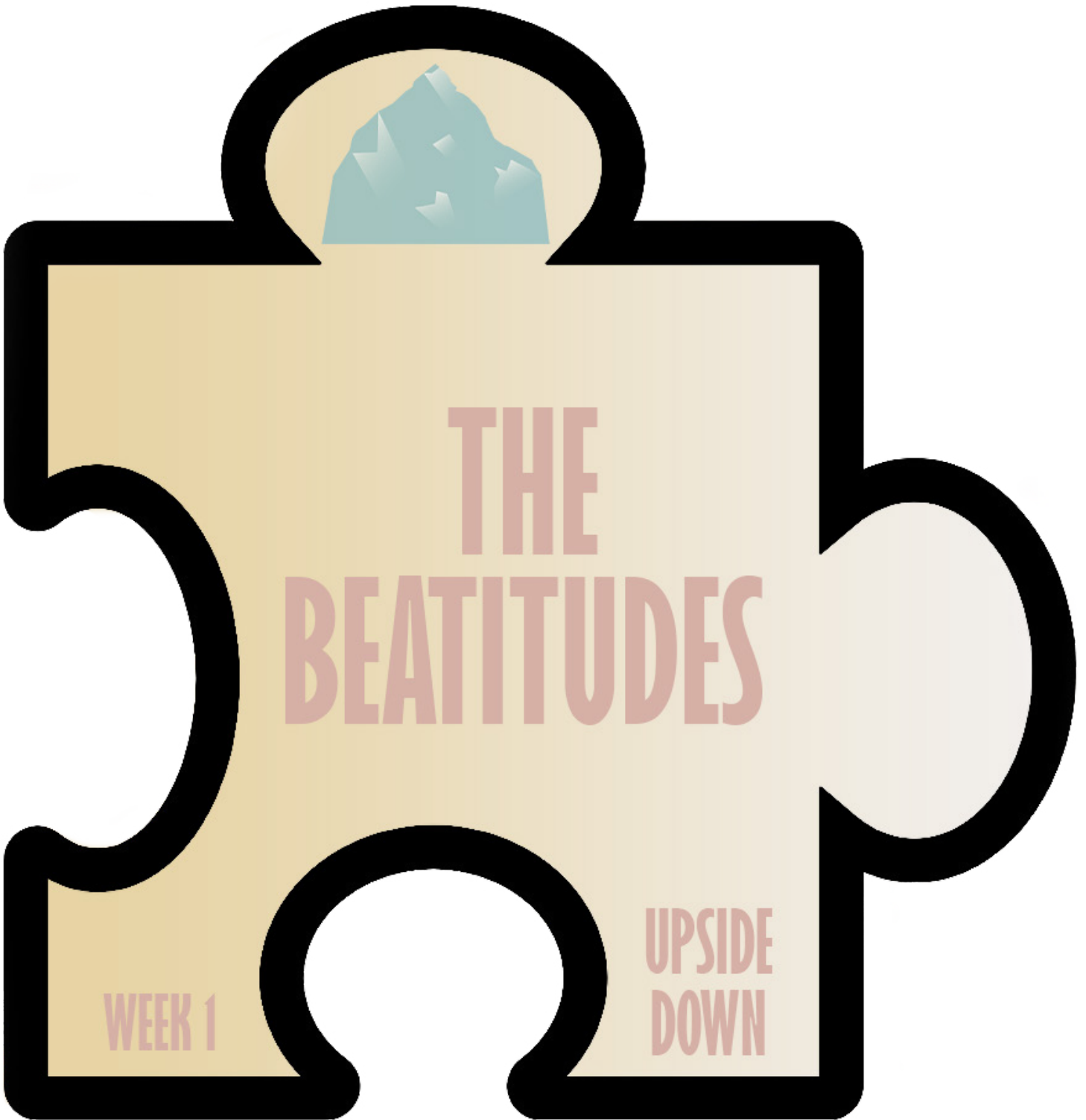
SAMPLE PRAYER: “God, thank You for giving blessings to Your children. Help us learn Your ways and grow to love them! Make us people who are like Your Son. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

RELEASE –

We only get to pour into the lives of our kids for a VERY short amount of time each week. As their leader, make sure you capitalize on every opportunity to show these children Jesus and His love for them!

PARENT GUIDE EXPLANATION:

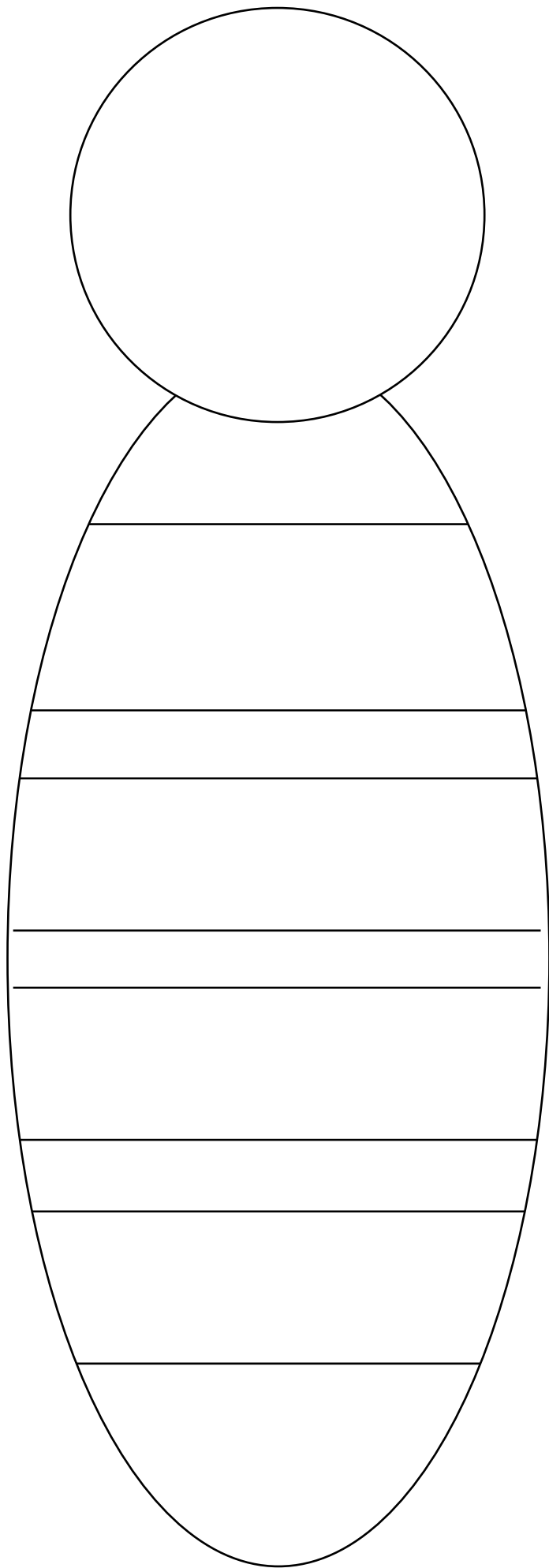
1. Provides engaging questions and activities for family discipleship.
2. Reviews what the children are learning each week.





³“God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. ⁴ God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. ⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

⁷ God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. ⁹ God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. ¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.”



LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 5:43-48 (ICB)

BIG IDEA

Jesus teaches us God's way.

FOCUS VERSE

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

LESSON MATERIALS

| Puzzle Piece | Large Mason Jars | Masking Tape | Clothespins | 2” Construction Paper Hearts
| Glue | *Love Your Enemies* Wristbands | Cardstock Paper | Heart Stickers | Tape | Markers or Crayons |

GREET — 15 MINUTES

Connection questions to ask as the children arrive:

- Name one person you love. Why do you love them?
- What does it mean to love someone?

WORSHIP — 10 MINUTES

When we worship, we get to bless the Lord with our voices and our bodies. God loves to see our devotion to Him in worship. Be sacrificial in your worship, knowing that your class is looking to you for spiritual direction. They learn from watching you!

PRAY — 5 MINUTES

Gather everyone for prayer.



BUILD-IN THE HABIT OF PRAYING FOR YOUR STUDENTS. AS YOU PREPARE FOR THE LESSON, SAY EACH PERSON'S NAME ALOUD AS YOU PRAY THAT GOD WILL TRANSFORM THEIR HEARTS.

SAMPLE PRAYER: *“Lord, we are excited to be with You today! Thank You for loving us so much that You gave us the Bible so we could learn more about who You are. God, we love You! Amen.”*

REVIEW — 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece |

BACKGROUND: Say, "This is our second week in the Upside-Down unit! Who can remind the group why we call these lessons Upside-Down? Right! We are learning about Jesus' teachings from His 'Sermon on the Mount.' Some of the things He taught sounded so strange and backward that they seemed upside-down! Last week, we learned about the Beatitudes, which was where Jesus described who God blesses. Do you remember any of the surprising Beatitudes? [Wait for responses.] This week, we have more upside-down commands from Jesus' sermon. Remember, **Jesus teaches us God's way**—the best way. Let's put up our new puzzle piece." Have a child put the puzzle piece on the wall.

TRANSITION: Say, "Who is ready to play a game that will help us understand our story?"

ENGAGE — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Large Mason Jars (1 per group) | Masking Tape | Clothespins (2 per child) | 2" Construction Paper Hearts (2 per child) | Glue |

Say, "Today's game is called *How Much Love!* Show me you are ready to hear the directions."



BEFORE CLASS, CUT OUT 2 CONSTRUCTION PAPER HEARTS FOR EACH CHILD. THEN, GLUE A CLOTHESPIN TO EACH HEART.

GAME GOAL: To see which group can drop the most hearts into their team's mason jar.

HOW TO PLAY:

- You will need two groups for this activity and the clothespins with hearts glued to them.
- Use the masking tape to create a starting line (approximately six inches long) for each group on the floor. (Space each group's line at least six feet from one another.)
- Then, place one mason jar on the floor about twelve inches in front of each group's line.
- Give each child two clothespins (with hearts) and have both groups form a line behind their group's starting tape line.
- One at a time, the children should stand straight and tall behind their own starting line and attempt to drop their two clothespins into the mason jar without bending or squatting down.
- Assign points to each group based on how many clothespins are successfully dropped into the mason jars (one point per clothespin).
- The team with the most points at the end of the round wins.

CHALLENGE: If you want your class to be moving around more during this game, you can also turn this game into a relay!

TRANSITION: Say, "Great job playing *How Much Love!* We will talk a lot about love in today's story as we read another one of Jesus' upside-down teachings! Are you ready? Me too!"

LEARN — 15 MINUTES

Say, "In this week's story, the crowds and disciples are still on the mountain listening to Jesus. Do you remember what we call this special teaching of Jesus? [Wait for responses.] Yes! It is called the 'Sermon on the Mount.' After He finished the Beatitudes, Jesus continued talking about love. Before we read the

story, who do YOU think Jesus wants us to love? [Wait for responses.] Great guesses! Let's discover God's way." Read Matthew 5:43-48 (ICB).

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemies.'
⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you. ⁴⁵ If you do this, then you will be true sons [and daughters] of your Father in heaven... ⁴⁶ If you love only the people who love you, then you will get no reward... ⁴⁷ And if you are nice only to your friends, then you are no better than other people. Even people without God are nice to their friends. ⁴⁸ So you must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Say, "Wait! Enemies are people who don't like us and sometimes try to hurt us, and Jesus is telling us to love our enemies. That is very upside-down! Remember, **Jesus teaches us God's way.**"

Ask, "Why do you think Jesus would tell us to love our enemies? [Wait for response.] Those are good answers! Jesus is asking us to do something that seems very upside-down to us, but it is not upside-down to God because this is how He loves us! Before we loved God, the Bible says we were His enemies [Romans 5:10]! Woah! It is incredible that God loved us when we were His enemies, and He still loves us, even when we sin. We love those who hurt us because God did that for us! It is a good thing that **Jesus teaches us God's way**, and He teaches us to love our enemies!"

TRANSITION: Say, "Aren't you grateful **Jesus teaches us God's way?**"

DISCUSS – 10 MINUTES

Discuss the story: Say, "Let's see what you can remember about today's story."

1. Jesus taught us a better way. Whose way does Jesus teach us to follow?

Response: **Jesus teaches us God's way.**

2. What is Jesus' upside-down teaching in this story?

Response: Jesus teaches us to love our enemies.

3. What makes Jesus' teaching upside-down?

Response: We usually think about how we can get back at our enemies, not how we can love them, but God has a better way. God calls us to love others, even when they treat us poorly.



UNCONDITIONAL LOVE IS HARD! WE NEED GOD'S HELP TO LOVE OUR ENEMIES.

4. Loving your enemies will change your heart. What do you think I mean by that?

Response: Answers will vary.

5. Jesus tells us to pray for the people who hurt us. Why is prayer the best way to start loving our enemies?

Response: Answers will vary.

6. Without saying names, share one way you can love an "enemy" this week.

Response: Answers will vary.

7. What do we learn about Jesus in this teaching?

Response: **Jesus teaches us God's way, Jesus' ways seem upside-down to us, Jesus wants us to love our enemies, Jesus can help us love people the way God loves people, etc.**

TRANSITION: Say, "We had a great discussion today! Thank you for all of your answers. Now, let's work on a craft that will remind us to love our enemies."

RESPOND — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *Love Your Enemies* Wristbands (1 wristband per child) | Cardstock Paper | Heart Stickers (3 stickers per child) | Tape | Markers or Crayons |



BEFORE CLASS, PRINT *LOVE YOUR ENEMIES* WRISTBANDS ON CARDSTOCK AND CUT OUT ONE FOR EACH CHILD. CARDSTOCK WORKS BEST FOR THIS PROJECT.

Say, "Today, we are making wristbands that remind us of Jesus' upside-down teaching—*Love Your Enemies!* Remember, **Jesus teaches us God's way!**"

- Give each child a *Love Your Enemies* Wristband, three heart stickers, a piece of tape, and markers or crayons.
- First, decorate the wristband with stickers and markers or crayons.
- Then, have them help each other tape their *Love Your Enemies* Wristbands on.

TRANSITION: Say, "Great job making your *Love Your Enemies* wristbands! Wear them to remind you that God's way means to love your enemies. **Jesus teaches us God's way.**"

MEMORIZE — 5 MINUTES

Say, "It is time to practice the verse we started learning last week. It can help us remember that God's ways are better than our ways. Remember, this verse is said like God is speaking it to us." Read the verse multiple times and have the kids repeat the verse after you.

"As the heavens are higher [arms up] than the earth [arms down], so are my ways [point a finger toward heaven] higher than your ways [point a finger toward yourself] and my thoughts [point a finger toward heaven] than your thoughts [point at your own head]." Isaiah 55:9 (NIV) (hold out hands like a book)

CHALLENGE: Learning to pray Scripture is a spiritual discipline we can practice our whole lives! Start teaching the children how to do this by praying after each phrase of our memory verse. For example, read the first few words of the verse and then pause to pray a response. You can thank God that heaven is perfect and that we can look to Him (in heaven) when things are hard on Earth. You could also praise God for being the Creator of all things. Your prayer could sound like this: "God, we thank You that heaven is not like earth—it is so much better! Every time we look up at the sky, remind us that heaven is high above us and greater than we can imagine. Thank You for creating heaven for us!" After you model this prayer, allow the children to say their own responsive prayers.

REFLECT – 5 MINUTES

Say, “Jesus surprised everyone by sharing God’s upside-down love and by telling us to love in upside-down ways too! It certainly feels strange to love our enemies, but **Jesus teaches us God’s way** and God’s way is always the best way! It is also important to remember that we can’t love our enemies without God’s help. Think about a person who seems like an enemy and silently ask God to help you love them with His love.”



MAKE SURE THIS ACTIVITY IS DONE SILENTLY! THE PRAYER WILL DERAILED IF THE CHILDREN SAY THE NAMES OF THEIR “ENEMIES” ALOUD, ESPECIALLY IF THEY NAME KIDS IN THE CLASS.

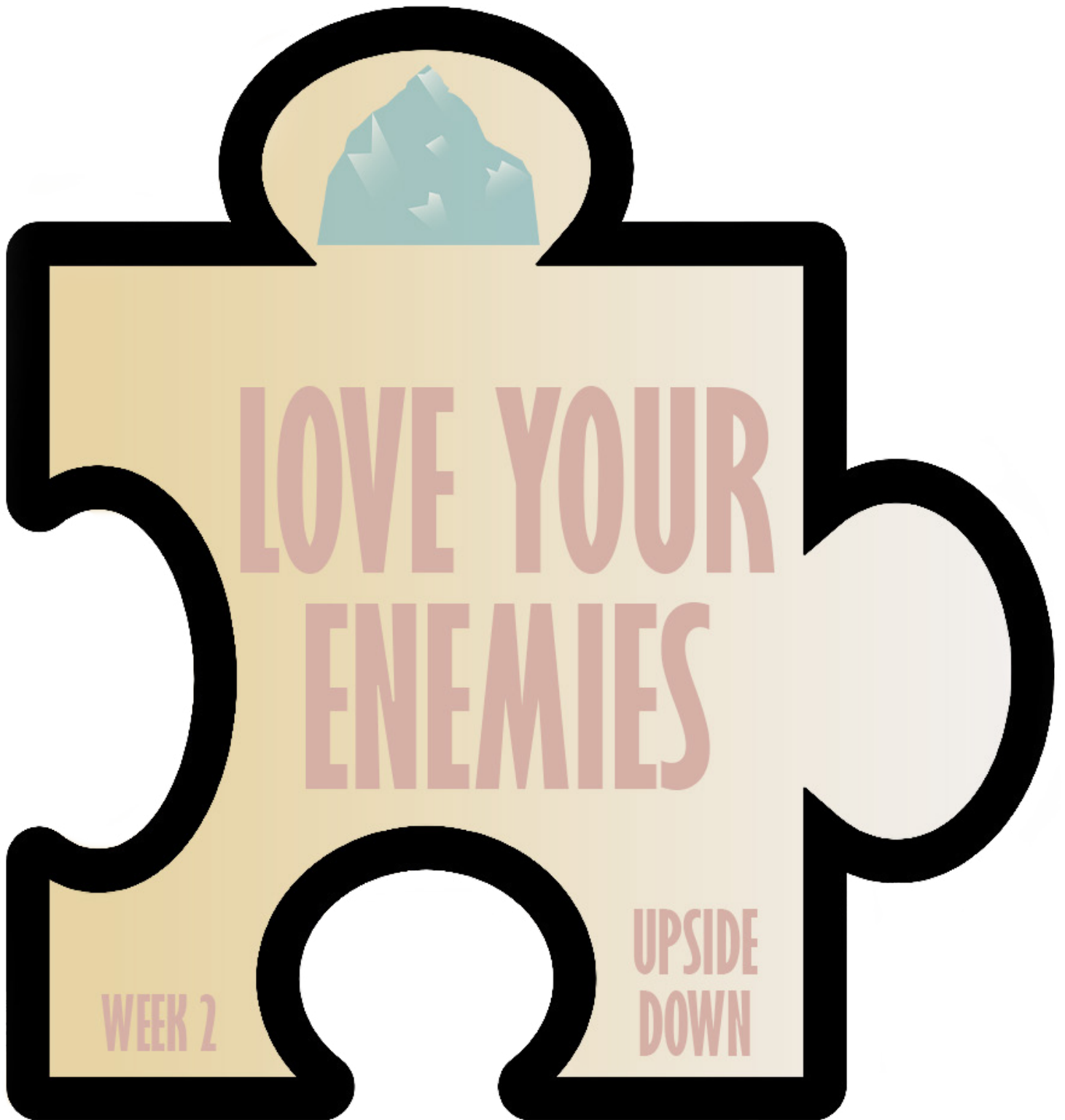
SAMPLE PRAYER: *“Jesus, Your teaching was hard today, and we need Your help loving people the way You love us. Please help us love our enemies. Remind us to be kind even when others aren’t kind to us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

RELEASE –

Use additional time remaining to review the story, pray for specific requests, or replay the ENGAGE game.

PARENT GUIDE EXPLANATION:

1. Provides engaging questions and activities for family discipleship.
2. Reviews what the children are learning each week.



LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

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LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

GIVING TO THE NEEDY

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 6:1-4 (ICB)

BIG IDEA

Jesus teaches us God's way.

FOCUS VERSE

“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

LESSON MATERIALS

| Puzzle Piece | Pool Noodles | Tarps or Blankets | Hula Hoops | Masking Tape | Chairs | PVC Pipes (Optional) | Plastic Money | 6” Felt or Fabric Squares | Ribbon | Paper | Markers |

GREET — 15 MINUTES

Connection questions to ask as the children arrive:

- Tell me about a time when you needed something, and someone helped you.
- Who do you enjoy helping?

WORSHIP — 10 MINUTES

It is a privilege to worship God with the children we disciple. If the kids in your group don't stay in the sanctuary for worship (before coming to class), sing at least one song together each week. You don't need videos or dance moves for it to be meaningful. Worship is not about the latest technology, and it can be as simple as playing music from a phone or including a new volunteer (teenagers can make great children's music leaders) to lead. Use the means you have available to make a joyful noise to God together!

PRAY — 5 MINUTES

Gather everyone for prayer.



PRAYER IS A FOUNDATIONAL SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE. TAKE A MOMENT TO EXPLAIN THAT PRAYER IS ONE WAY WE GET CLOSE TO GOD. IF POSSIBLE, USE AN EXAMPLE FROM YOUR LIFE TO DEMONSTRATE HOW GOD HAS HELPED YOU GROW IN PRAYER.

SAMPLE PRAYER: *“Lord, we are so excited to learn from You today! Thank You for giving us the Bible. You must really love us! In Jesus’ name, Amen.”*

REVIEW – 5 MINUTES**MATERIALS:** | Puzzle Piece |

BACKGROUND: Say, “Who can remind us what we have been learning this month? [Wait for responses.] Great! We are learning that **Jesus teaches us God’s way**. The message Jesus taught in His ‘Sermon on the Mount’ seemed upside-down, but it is really the right way—God’s way! In the first week, we found out that God blesses people we wouldn’t expect in the Beatitudes. Then, last week, we discovered that Jesus wants us to love our enemies and those who hurt us. Wow, that seems upside-down, doesn’t it? Remember, though, **Jesus teaches us God’s way** which is always the best way. Now, we get to read about another upside-down lesson from Jesus, but first, let’s hang up the next puzzle piece.” Have a child put the puzzle piece on the wall.

TRANSITION: Say, “You know what time it is! It is game time!”

ENGAGE – 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Pool Noodles (5 per team) | Tarps or Blankets (1 per team) | Hula Hoops (6 per team) | Masking Tape (1 roll per team) | Chairs (4 per team) | PVC Pipes (Optional) |



IF YOU DO NOT HAVE THESE MATERIALS, GET CREATIVE AND USE WHAT YOU ALREADY OWN OR CAN FIND AROUND THE CHURCH. FOR EXAMPLE, YOU COULD TOWELS, PILLOWS, OR EVEN CARPET SQUARES.

Say, “For this game, we will break into teams to build a fort or a ‘home!’ We are going to call this game, *Home-Sweet-Home*. Raise your hand if you think you can build the BEST home. Great! Let’s try it!”

GAME GOAL: To use the provided supplies to build the best and sturdiest “home” possible.

HOW TO PLAY:

- Divide your class into equal groups of no more than four children. Provide each group with building supplies. (Each group should have the same items.)
- When you say, “go,” give each team five minutes to create the BEST home they can. (A good home should have a covering over the top and be able to hold together by itself.)
- Once the time is up, have the children compliment one another’s creations. Please encourage them to share what they learned from the other teams. Then, switch teams, and play again using what they learned from the previous experience to make even better homes!

CHALLENGE: Include one or two random items in each group’s supplies. Challenge the teams to incorporate everything they’ve been given in some practical way.

TRANSITION: Say, “Great job playing *Home-Sweet-Home*! In our story today, we will talk about how to love people who need help. Let’s see what Jesus has to teach us in this week’s lesson.”

LEARN – 10 MINUTES

Say, “Have you ever seen someone who is homeless? [Wait for responses.] Yes! You may have seen people asking for help on the side of the road, or you may have seen someone who looks like they are

living outside. They need help, don't they? We also see people who have homes but need other types of help. Give me some examples of some people who need help. [Wait for responses.] We will read an upside-down lesson this week about how God wants us to give to those in need. Let's listen." Read Matthew 6:1-4 (ICB).

¹ "Be careful! When you do good things, don't do them in front of people to be seen by them. If you do that, then you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ² "When you give to the poor, don't be like the hypocrites [people who pretend]. They blow trumpets before they give so that people will see them. They do that in the synagogues and on the streets. They want other people to honor [love/be proud of] them... ³ So when you give to the poor, give very secretly. Don't let anyone know what you are doing. ⁴ Your giving should be done in secret. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you.

Say, "Wait! Did we read that correctly? Does God's way of giving mean that we don't tell anyone about it? That sounds upside-down! Jesus knows that we should always give to those in need, but there is a special way He wants us to do that.

Ask, "Why does Jesus want us to give in secret? [Wait for responses.] Because **Jesus teaches us God's way**. Jesus is asking us to do something that seems upside-down, but it is really God's way, and God's way is always the best way. God doesn't want us to give so that people will think we are amazing. In fact, God says we should NOT do things so that other people will tell us how great we are [John 12:43]. Instead, we should do good things because we love God and want to obey Him. The upside-down part of this lesson is that Jesus asks us to give in secret. Do you think this means it is never okay to help if we'll be seen? No, it just means that anytime we can help others in quiet and private ways, we should do it for the Lord and not for others' attention. **Jesus teaches us God's way**, and He teaches us to give to the needy in secret so we can become more like His Son!"

TRANSITION: Say, "Aren't you grateful **Jesus teaches us God's way**? It is so much better than our way!"

DISCUSS – 10 MINUTES

Discuss the story: Say, "Let's talk about the story."

1. Jesus taught us a better way. Whose way does Jesus teach us to follow?

Response: **Jesus teaches us God's way.**

2. Why is giving in secret an upside-down teaching?

Response: Jesus taught that when we give, we should do it privately. It is not surprising that we should help those in need. It is surprising that God is so concerned about our hearts that He asks us to give secretly.

3. It is normal to want to be praised by people around us, but whose praise should we seek?

Response: We should seek God's praise.

4. Is giving in secret an easy thing to do?

Response: Answers will vary.

5. What do we learn about Jesus in this teaching?

Response: **Jesus teaches us God's way**, Jesus teaches upside-down ways, Jesus loves

when we give in secret, Jesus blesses those who do good things for Him, Jesus cares about why we do things because He cares about our hearts, etc.

TRANSITION: Say, "Great job, everyone! **Jesus teaches us God's way!** Now, let's make a craft to help us remember our lesson."

RESPOND — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Plastic Money or Paper Money (3 coins or bills per person) | 6" Felt or Fabric Squares (1 per child) | 8" Length of Ribbon (1 per child) | Paper (1 sheet per person) | Markers |

Say, "For today's craft, we will be making little bags of money so we can retell Jesus' upside-down teaching about giving in secret. Remember, **Jesus teaches us God's way**, which is always the best way!"

- Give each child three coins, a piece of felt or fabric, and a strand of ribbon.
- Have the kids lay the felt or fabric square flat on the table and place the coins in the middle of the square.
- Once the coins are in the middle, pull all the corners of the felt or fabric together and tie it closed with the ribbon. (It should look like a small, cinched bag of coins.)
- Then, take turns having the kids use their bags of money to demonstrate and contrast giving OUR way with GOD'S way. Talk about how each method is different.
- Finally, pass out the paper and markers. Ask the children to make a list or draw pictures of how they can secretly give to others in their lives. Help the kids see that this teaching is about more than just giving money to the poor – it is about HOW we give to those in need. Giving to the "poor" could include offering encouragement or attention, or it could mean inviting a lonely child to play or eat with you. If the children need help with ideas, have them brainstorm before they begin this activity.

TRANSITION: Say, "Great job! Now you can show your family what you learned and be ready to love the needy this week. Be sure to remind them that Jesus teaches us to give in secret because He loves us and is making us like His Son, Jesus, who never sought the attention of anyone but His Father. Then, tell your parents our big idea for this month: **Jesus teaches us God's way.**"

MEMORIZE — 5 MINUTES

Say, "We get to memorize God's Word! What a privilege that is! Please pay attention to the words of the verse while we recite it. It is important to memorize the verse AND understand what it means."

"As the heavens are higher [arms up] than the earth [arms down], so are my ways [point a finger toward heaven] higher than your ways [point a finger toward yourself] and my thoughts [point a finger toward heaven] than your thoughts [point at your own head]." Isaiah 55:9 (NIV) (hold out hands like a book)



IF YOUR CLASS IS LOSING INTEREST IN VERSE MEMORIZATION, INCORPORATE A "CHALLENGE" STRATEGY.

CHALLENGE: A fun way to remember the verse is by changing your voice at different spots. For example, when you say the word “higher,” have everyone make the highest and squeakiest sound they can! Or, when you say, “my thoughts,” use an authoritative voice as compared to a quiet, humble voice when you say, “your thoughts.”

REFLECT – 5 MINUTES

Say, “Jesus surprised everyone with God’s upside-down teachings! This week, we learned that Jesus said we should give in secret instead of giving to be admired. **Jesus teaches us God’s way**, and it is always the best way! Next time you want to impress the people around you, remind yourself that God’s approval is the only one that really matters. Can everyone say, ‘**Jesus teaches us God’s way**?’”

SAMPLE PRAYER: “Jesus, Your upside-down teachings can be hard. Help us look to You instead of other people for praise. We want to love others Your way because it is the best way! Thank You for teaching us the right way! In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

RELEASE –

Focus on getting to know the kids in your class when you have extra time. Ask lots of questions, share jokes (kids love to laugh), or play games together. Relationship-building is an integral part of discipleship.



DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF GETTING TO KNOW YOUR KIDS AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM.

PARENT GUIDE EXPLANATION:

1. Provides engaging questions and activities for family discipleship.
2. Reviews what the children are learning each week.



STORING TREASURES IN HEAVEN

BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 6:19-21 (ICB)

BIG IDEA

Jesus teaches us God's way.

FOCUS VERSE

"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:9 (NIV)

LESSON MATERIALS

| Puzzle Piece | *Treasures* Page | Small Bug Stickers | Markers or Crayons |

GREET — 15 MINUTES

Connection questions to ask as the children arrive:

- What is one way you can earn money?
- Do you do chores at home? If so, which chores do you enjoy, and which ones do you dread?

WORSHIP — 10 MINUTES

Encourage your group to worship differently than usual. If the children normally dance and move around, practice being still. If they typically sing quietly with their hands by their sides, show them that it can be good to lift hands high in the air in praise to God. End worship with a reminder that God loves it when our worship comes from our longing to delight in Him!



HELPING KIDS BREAK OUT OF THEIR WORSHIP "ROUTINE" CAN ENCOURAGE THEM TO BE MORE THOUGHTFUL AND ENGAGED AS THEY SING.

PRAY — 5 MINUTES

Pray over your class and their learning of the lesson.

SAMPLE PRAYER: *"Lord, we are excited to learn from You today! Open our minds and our ears to understand and know You better. We love You, Jesus! Amen."*

REVIEW — 5 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | Puzzle Piece |

BACKGROUND: Say, "This month, we have learned that **Jesus teaches us God's way**, and sometimes God's way seems VERY upside down to us! Who can tell us what we mean when we say God's way seems 'upside-down'? [Wait for responses.] Great! So far, we have learned that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about the people God blesses [the Beatitudes], that we are to love our enemies, and that when we help others by giving, we should do it in secret [whenever possible]. Aren't these fantastic, upside-down teachings? Now, let's get ready for our last upside-down lesson from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Who would like to put up the next puzzle piece?" Have a child put the puzzle piece on the wall.

TRANSITION: Say, "Who is ready to play a game? Great! This week's game will prepare our minds and hearts for God's story, just like we prayed! Let's do it!"

ENGAGE – 15 MINUTES

Say, "This week's game is called *Trash or Treasure!* I will say an item, and each person will vote on whether they believe it is a trash or a treasure. When I say 'trash,' I mean it is not helpful or useful. When I say 'treasure' I mean that it is valuable or it is something we need and use. Our answers will probably be very different, and that is OK! Let's see what our friends think is 'trash' and what they believe is 'treasure!'"

GAME GOAL: To have each person vote on whether a series of items are "trash" or "treasure."

HOW TO PLAY:

- To start the game, instruct everyone to sit in a circle facing one another.
- Tell the kids that they will be voting with their thumbs on whether the item mentioned is trash (thumbs down) or treasure (thumbs up).
- Remind the kids that it is OK (and expected) for the group to disagree.



MAKE SURE NO ONE IS SHAMED OR MADE FUN OF FOR THEIR ANSWERS. ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO TAKE JOY IN THEIR DIFFERENT OPINIONS.

- Here are some items you can have the kids vote on as "trash" or "treasure:"
Sinks, Clocks, Doors, Sponges, Board Games, Video Games, Sports Games, Water Bottles, Books, Tissues, Paper, Grass, Pencils, Money, Banana Peels, Cars, Beds, Electricity, Chairs, Leaves, TVs, etc.

MODIFICATION: If the game moves too quickly, each time you name an item, choose a child to explain why they voted "trash" (thumbs down) or "treasure" (thumbs up).



IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN WHO NEED TO RUN AROUND, DESIGNATE ONE HALF OF THE ROOM "TRASH" AND THE OTHER SIDE "TREASURE." THEN, HAVE THE CHILDREN MOVE FROM ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER DEPENDING ON THEIR VOTE FOR EACH ITEM.

TRANSITION: Say, "Great job playing *Trash or Treasure!* Do you know what I noticed? I saw that some people think certain items are treasures while others think those same things are trash! It is OK to disagree about these types of things, as long as we DO agree on one important thing: God's truth in the Bible! Now, let's see what God's Word tells us about our treasures."

LEARN – 10 MINUTES

Say, “Who likes treasure? Yes! Most of us do! Treasure can be money or something else you love; treasure can be your favorite game, blanket, or even a toy! Before today, you may not have even known that you have treasures! Well, Jesus has some upside-down teachings about treasure, and we can believe it because we find it in God’s Word.” Read Matthew 6:19-21 (ICB).

¹⁹ “Don’t store treasures for yourselves here on earth. Moths and rust will destroy treasures here on earth. And thieves can break into your house and steal the things you have. ²⁰ So store your treasure in heaven. The treasures in heaven cannot be destroyed by moths or rust. And thieves cannot break in and steal that treasure. ²¹ Your heart will be where your treasure is.



“TREASURES” IN THIS PASSAGE CAN MEAN MONEY OR ANYTHING THAT IS VALUABLE TO US.

Say, “Wait a second. Did that sound upside-down to anyone else? Jesus says we shouldn’t collect and store treasures here on earth. That sounds upside-down to me!”

Ask, “Where did Jesus say we should store our treasure? [Wait for responses.] Yes! Jesus says we need to store our treasures in heaven. Let’s talk about why He said this and how this is possible. Have you ever had a special toy or game get ruined? [Wait for responses.] Yeah, me too! Jesus knows terrible things can happen to our earthly treasures, so He wants us to have our most special treasures in heaven. Can someone guess who the MOST special treasure is in heaven? [Wait for responses.] Right! Our treasure in heaven is Jesus! Instead of focusing on getting more money and things on earth, we should spend our time and money on things that make God happy and give us rewards in heaven. This is GOOD news!”



CLARIFY THAT HAVING EARTHLY TREASURES ARE NOT BAD AS LONG AS GOD IS OUR NUMBER ONE TREASURE.

TRANSITION: Say, “Aren’t you grateful **Jesus teaches us God’s way?** His way is so much better than our ways!”

DISCUSS – 10 MINUTES

Discuss the story: Say, “Let’s answer some questions about our story.”

1. Jesus taught us a better way. Whose way does Jesus teach us to follow?

Response: **Jesus teaches us God’s way.**

2. Why did we say this teaching on storing treasures in heaven is “upside-down”?

Response: Jesus taught us that we should not store treasures on earth but instead store them in heaven. We would normally think that we should get as much treasure as we can on earth to live great lives, but that is not what Jesus teaches.

3. How do we store treasures in heaven when we live on earth? What do you think Jesus meant when He said this?

Response: Jesus doesn’t want the things we save for ourselves to be the things we will

leave behind one day. He wants us to look toward the future in heaven and put our most valuable things there.

4. What can happen to the “treasures” we store on earth?

Response: Our earthly treasures will eventually be ruined, destroyed, or stolen.

5. Who is our most special treasure in heaven?

Response: Jesus!

6. Why do you think Jesus took the time to teach on God’s upside-down ways?

Response: Answers will vary.

7. Name one thing you can do this week to remind yourself that Jesus is your most special treasure?

Response: Answers will vary.

8. What do we learn about Jesus in this teaching?

Response: **Jesus teaches us God’s way**, Jesus teaches upside-down lessons, Jesus wants our most important treasures to be in heaven, Jesus asks us to seek Him first, etc.

TRANSITION: Say, “**Jesus teaches us God’s way**, doesn’t He? Let’s make a craft to help us remember Jesus’ upside-down lesson about our treasures!”

RESPOND — 15 MINUTES

MATERIALS: | *Treasures* Page (1 page) | Small Bug Stickers (6 per child) | Markers or Crayons |

Say, “For today’s craft, we will be thinking about our favorite earthly treasures and our best treasure in heaven—Jesus! Who remembers what happens to earthy treasures? [Wait for responses.] Right! They eventually get ruined, destroyed, or stolen!”

- Give each child a *Treasures* page, six small bug stickers, and markers or crayons.
- In the three boxes on the bottom of the page, have the kids draw three of their favorite earthly treasures.
- In the box at the top of the page, write the word “Jesus” to represent their best treasure!
- Once all the boxes are “full,” have the kids color the rest of their *Treasures* page.
- Finally, the kids will stick two bug stickers on each earthly treasure because these are the treasures that can be lost, ruined, or destroyed.

TRANSITION: Say, “Great job with your treasures! Who can tell me why we put bug stickers on the earthly treasures and not the treasure in heaven? [Wait for responses.] Right! Because our treasures on earth can get destroyed, eaten, and ruined while our treasure in heaven cannot. Remember, **Jesus teaches us God’s way.**”

MEMORIZE — 5 MINUTES

Say, “It is time to practice our memory verse for this month! Who thinks they already know the verse? Does anyone want to say it in front of the class? [Wait for responses.] Great! Just as a reminder, our verse is about how God’s ways are better than our ways. Let’s practice it.”

“As the heavens are higher [arms up] than the earth [arms down], so are my ways [point a finger toward heaven] higher than your ways [point a finger toward yourself] and my thoughts [point a finger toward heaven] than your thoughts [point at your own head].” Isaiah 55:9 (NIV) (hold out hands like a book)

CHALLENGE: To increase retention, have your class partner up and share the verse back and forth with their partners.

REFLECT — 5 MINUTES

Say, “Jesus surprised everyone with God’s upside-down ways! When He taught the *Sermon on the Mount*, He showed us how God wants us to live. If we make Jesus our most special treasure, we will not ever have to worry about losing what matters most to us! **Jesus teaches us God’s way**, and it is always the best way!”

SAMPLE PRAYER: “Jesus, You’re so amazing! We are so grateful that we have You as our most special treasure. Thank You! Amen.”

RELEASE —

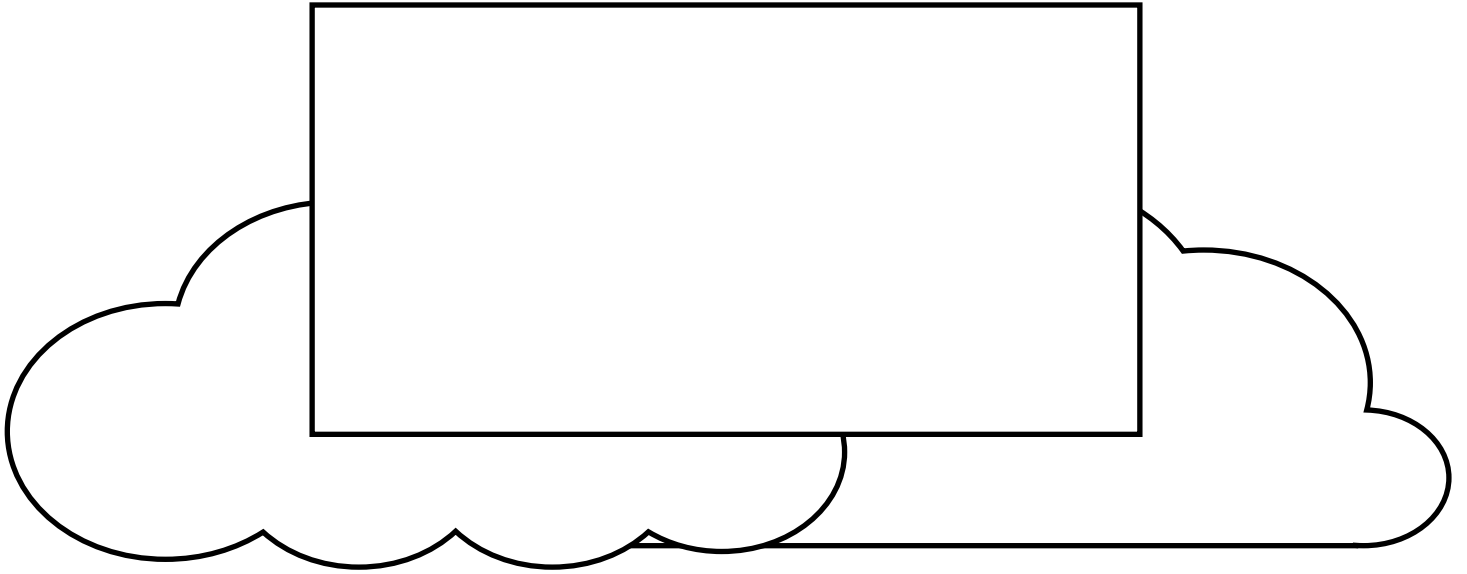
If you have extra time at the end of your lesson, talk more about the story, finish crafts, or play *Trash or Treasure* with your class again.

PARENT GUIDE EXPLANATION:

1. Provides engaging questions and activities for family discipleship.
2. Reviews what the children are learning each week.



STORING TREASURES IN HEAVEN



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