

ministry to youth



SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

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Lesson 1



Lesson 1:
Upside Down and Backwards:
The Beatitudes



Bible Verses:
Matthew 5:1-12, Matthew 11:29,
John 10:10



Bottom Line:
Jesus calls us to live in an upside-down
and backward way from the world.

SUPPLIES

Opening Game:

- Crown
- Upside Down & Backwards Trivia Sheet (included in files)
- Scoreboard (pen and paper, whiteboard, etc.)
- Optional: Buzzers

NOTES

All Scripture references are taken from the NLT unless otherwise indicated.

OPENING GAME

Monarch of the Mount: Upside Down & Backwards

Objective: Introduce to students the idea of things that are upside down and backward, which will be a key theme in the lesson.

Game Setup:

Print the Upside Down & Backwards Trivia Sheet (included in files).

Keep track of the score and have the necessary supplies ready.

How to Play the Game:

Students will go head-to-head in a fast-paced trivia game.

Two buzzers are helpful for this game, but clapping, raising hands, cowbells, or just yelling out the answer can also work.

SAY: Today, we're playing Monarch of the Mount!

I need the oldest student to be our starting King or Queen.

Let students determine the oldest. Bring that student up front.

SAY: Great! Here's your crown.

Place it upside down on the student's head.

SAY: Stand here, facing your opponents.

Everyone else, you're the peasants of the kingdom. Line up in a single file, facing the King / Queen.

You'll compete for the crown!

The King / Queen and the first peasant in line will each get a buzzer.

Hand them buzzers.

SAY: I'll read a trivia question.

The first one to buzz in gets to answer!

If the King / Queen answers correctly, they stay in power. The peasant moves to the end of the line.

If the peasant answers correctly, they take the crown and become the new Monarch.

If someone buzzes but answers incorrectly, the other automatically wins.

If no one buzzes in, the Monarch stays in power.

The next peasant in line steps up to challenge the Monarch.

We'll track how long each Monarch stays in power.

When trivia ends (or time runs out), the longest-reigning Monarch is crowned Eternal King / Queen!

Let's Play!

TEACH

SAY: That was a fun game!

Great job, everyone, and congratulations to our reigning King / Queen!

ASK: Did anyone catch the theme of the trivia questions?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: You guessed it – things that are upside down or backward, and we're about to dive into more of that.

We're kicking off a new teaching series today on the Sermon on the Mount – one of the most famous sermons in history.

We have amazing pastors here, but this sermon was next level!

ASK: Who preached the Sermon on the Mount?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Right, Jesus Himself.

If there's ever a sermon to pay close attention to, it's this one!

I mean, Jesus is preaching it.

Jesus spoke to a huge crowd, including His disciples, but instead of a stage with lights, mics, and fog, He sat on a hillside so everyone could see and hear Him.

That's why it's called the Sermon on the Mount.

What He said shocked people then, and it still challenges us today.

Jesus's Sermon on the Mount flips everything the world says on its head.

Each week for the next four weeks, we will look at one part of Jesus's sermon to see what it says to us today about Kingdom living.

Today, we begin with God's upside-down and backward kingdom.

Turn in your Bibles to the Beatitudes in [Matthew 5:1-12](#).

Allow students to turn in their Bibles and then read this passage out loud to the group or choose a student to read out loud.

1 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.

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.

11 God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers.

12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way."

SAY: When something in Scripture is repeated again and again, we should pay close attention.

ASK: Is there something that is repeated in this passage?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Right - "God blesses."

In our world today, we often think of "blessed" as getting the starting spot on the team, having the most followers on social media, acing a tough class, or going on an amazing vacation with pictures to prove it.

Being blessed seems tied to popularity, wealth, influence, power, and success.

But Jesus flips this idea completely upside down.

His list has nothing to do with popularity, position, or power.

Instead, He blesses people with qualities we might not admire – or even want.

Before we dive in, I want to point out that Jesus isn't commanding us to be this way.

He is revealing that real joy and satisfaction come from having these heart attitudes.

These qualities are called the Beatitudes.

So, let's jump in.

ASK: Who does Jesus call blessed in **verse 3**?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Yes, those who are poor and realize their need for God.

Another translation says, "the poor in spirit."

The poor in spirit know they cannot do life on their own without God.

They rely on Him to provide, trust Him to help, pray to Him regularly, and lean on His teachings to get them through hard times while remaining full of gratitude to Him in great times.

The opposite? Self-sufficiency – thinking, "I don't need God or anyone else. I've got this."

If the world were writing this sermon, it might say, "Blessed are those who have it all together and don't need God (or anyone else)."

But Jesus says real blessing comes from knowing we need Him.

ASK: Next one. What quality do we see in **verse 4**?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Right - those who mourn.

Life is hard.

We lose loved ones, relationships fall apart, dreams die, and we see brokenness everywhere.

Jesus says it's okay to grieve because the world isn't as it should be.

But instead of mourning, the world encourages numbing and distracting – doom-scrolling, binge-watching, substances, shopping, and more.

Jesus says that there is value in mourning, even if it's uncomfortable.

ASK: What's next?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Right - God blesses the meek, which means gentle.

That is a word that makes us think of someone who gets walked all over, isn't it?

Let's read [Matthew 11:29](#).

29 Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

SAY: Jesus describes Himself as gentle at heart – meek.

Meekness does not mean weakness.

It is strength under control.

The world values aggression, - "Blessed are those who demand their way and make the most noise."

But Jesus says true strength is in humility, kindness, and self-control.

ASK: [Verse 6](#) says what?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Yes - God blesses those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

People who seek God, chase after Him, and desire to do His will have a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

The opposite is indifference toward God.

The world tells us, "Blessed are those who chase whatever feels right."

We might hear this as "You do you", or "Do whatever makes you feel happy."

But Jesus says, "Chase Me, and you'll find true satisfaction."

The fifth thing Jesus says is that God blesses the merciful.

Mercy is treating someone in a way they don't deserve.

God is merciful to us in a huge way - we have wronged Him and deserve punishment for our sins, yet He mercifully provided Jesus as our Savior.

The opposite of being merciful is holding a grudge, seeking revenge, and being unforgiving.

The world says, "Blessed are those who never let things go."

This might look like revenge, getting even, holding a grudge, or planning how to get back at someone.

But Jesus says, "I have been merciful to you, now show mercy to others."

We have a few Beatitudes left. Let's look at pure in heart.

ASK: What do you think it means to be pure in heart?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: Good ideas. It means being the same person inside and out - not being fake.

A person who is pure in heart is not a hypocrite.

Their words and actions match.

The world might say, "Blessed be those who act good when it benefits them."

Have you ever known someone who was only nice to you if they wanted something from you?

Or someone who acted like the "perfect Christian" at church but lived a life completely opposite at school or in the locker room?

Those who are pure in heart are the same person no matter where they are.

Jesus says there are true blessings in living authentically with integrity.

Next - the peacemakers.

ASK: What do peacemakers do?

Take answers from the students.

SAY: They calm tense situations, seek solutions, and avoid stirring up drama.

Our world loves peace, but at the same time says, "Blessed are those who create conflict and the one who causes controversy gets attention."

But Jesus says there is a great blessing for the ones who seek peace.

And finally, Jesus spends a couple of verses on this last quality – those who are persecuted for doing what is right.

This persecution might mean being made fun of, lied about, or excluded because of your faith.

There might be kids at school who call you names because you won't cheat.

There might be friends who abandon you because you won't go along with their plan to shoplift.

There might be coworkers who lie about you and get you fired because you won't keep their wrong behavior quiet.

The world says, "You are blessed if you go along with the crowd."

Jesus says, "Chase Me, even when costs you."

Turn in your Bibles to [John 10:10](#).

10 The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.

SAY: The world promises happiness in status, wealth, and power.

But the world's purpose is to steal, kill, and destroy.

Jesus says the real rich and satisfying life is found in His upside-down and backward kingdom.

When we live by the Beatitudes, Jesus promises true blessings.

Not necessarily blessings as we tend to think of them.

Instead, they are about being close to God, knowing His comfort, experiencing His peace, and having a deep, unshakable joy that nothing can take away.

The Beatitudes remind us that following Jesus means living differently - upside down.

It means trusting that His way is better, even when it makes no sense because we know He keeps His promises and provides a life filled with His presence, joy, and eternal rewards.

As we go through this week, let's ask ourselves: "Am I chasing the things the world says are blessings, or am I living in the true blessings of God's upside-down and backward Kingdom?"

Let's pray.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which of the Beatitudes is the hardest for you to understand or relate to? Why? (Use [Matthew 5:1-12](#) for reference.)
2. Which of the Beatitudes have you seen lived out well by someone you know? Describe how that person acts.
3. The world tells us to chase success, popularity, and comfort. How do you see this message in social media, school, friendships, advertising, etc.?
4. What does it look like to depend on God rather than yourself in everyday life?
5. How is acknowledging pain and grief healthier than numbing it?
6. Can you think of someone who is both gentle and strong? How does having this attitude impact others?
7. Being “**pure in heart**” means having the right motives. What are some situations where it’s tempting to act differently depending on who’s watching?
8. Have you ever faced criticism or rejection because of your faith? How did you respond?
9. Which Beatitude challenges you the most, and what is one way you can live it out this week?

Upside-Down & Backwards Trivia

Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 1

Question	Answer
What small mammal is famous for sleeping while hanging upside down?	Bat
What word is “wow” turned upside down?	Mom
Which insect can walk upside down on ceilings thanks to tiny hairs on its feet?	Housefly
What type of fish swims upside down to feed on the water’s surface?	Upside-down catfish
Which rainforest animal has claws that help it hang upside down for most of its life?	Sloth
Which insect is known to hang upside down from a silk thread while metamorphosing?	Caterpillar
What number is “15673” backwards	37651
What sea creature moves by flipping itself inside out when it turns into an adult?	Jellyfish
What do goats sometimes do when they climb nearly vertical walls, appearing almost upside down?	Use their specialized hooves for grip
True or False? The word NOON is the same upside down and backwards.	True
What tree’s roots look like they are growing out of the sky because its branches resemble an underground system?	Baobab tree
In <i>Stranger Things</i> , what is the name of the terrifying alternate dimension that exists beneath reality?	The Upside Down
What word is “pop” turned upside down?	dod
True or False? Some birds sleep upside down.	True
In which 2010 sci-fi movie does a city fold upside down during a dream sequence?	Inception
In <i>Spider-Man</i> , which iconic romantic scene features Spider-Man hanging upside down for a kiss?	The upside-down kiss with Mary Jane

Upside-Down & Backwards Trivia

Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 1

What famous wizarding sport is played on flying broomsticks, sometimes requiring players to fly upside down?	Quidditch
What animated Pixar film features a character named Joy who learns to embrace sadness, turning expectations upside down?	Inside Out
Which <i>Doctor Strange</i> movie features entire cities folding and twisting upside down during battle scenes?	Doctor Strange (2016)
Which <i>Star Wars</i> character trains by hanging upside down in a cave on Hoth?	Luke Skywalker
In which animated TV show does a character have a head shaped like an upside-down ice cream cone?	Hey Arnold!
In which <i>Super Mario</i> game does gravity flip upside down, making players walk on the ceiling?	Super Mario Galaxy
What word do the numbers 808 spell on an upside-down calculator?	Bob
What classic puzzle video game sometimes flips pieces upside down for an extra challenge?	Tetris
Which <i>Zelda</i> game features the <i>Stone Tower Temple</i> , where players must flip the entire dungeon upside down?	The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask
What force keeps us from floating upside down into space?	Gravity
What is the name of the phenomenon where your reflection in a spoon appears upside down?	Concave reflection
What planet is often called "Earth's twin" but has an atmosphere so thick it would crush you?	Venus (which rotates upside down compared to other planets)
What is the term for when astronauts experience weightlessness and appear to float upside down?	Microgravity
What famous Italian scientist discovered that objects fall at the same rate regardless of weight?	Galileo Galilei

Upside-Down & Backwards Trivia

Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 1

What famous artist painted upside-down images that look different when flipped?	M.C. Escher
What ancient civilization believed the sky was an upside-down ocean?	The Mesopotamians
True or False? If you turn an hourglass upside down it will still work.	True
What famous magician performed an escape while hanging upside down in a water tank?	Harry Houdini
What fast-food restaurant's logo is an upside-down "W" when flipped?	McDonald's (becomes "WcDonald's")
What playground equipment allows kids to hang upside down?	Monkey bars
What fruit is known for being "upside down" because it grows with the leafy part on top?	Pineapple
What dance move involves spinning upside down on your head?	Headspin (from breakdancing)
What logo forms a frown if you flip it upside down?	Amazon
What holiday tradition involves hanging something upside down over a doorway for kisses?	Mistletoe
What symbol is sometimes turned upside down to indicate distress?	An upside-down flag
What fashion trend involves wearing a hoodie backwards?	Reverse hoodie trend
What cooking technique involves flipping a pan of food to cook it evenly?	Flambé or flipping pancakes
Will an upside down QR code work just like a right side up one?	Yes
What is the name of an upside-down pie that is famous in France?	Tarte Tatin
What optical illusion makes some faces look normal right-side up but weird when flipped?	Thatcher effect

Upside-Down & Backwards Trivia

Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 1

What is the term for writing letters upside down in secret messages?	Ambigram writing
What word do the numbers 07734 spell on an upside-down calculator?	Hello
True or False? Tomato plants can grow upside down.	True
True or False? A squirrel can run upside down.	True
What is the English word for writing in reverse, often used to prevent easy reading?	Mirror writing
Which famous artist and inventor wrote in mirror writing?	Leonardo da Vinci
What is the name of the backward-talking character in "Twin Peaks"?	The Man from Another Place
What is the term for playing a song in reverse to find hidden messages?	Backmasking
What is the longest single-word palindrome in English?	Racecar
What is the backward version of "stressed" that means a treat?	Desserts
Which classic board game requires players to move backward after landing on certain spaces?	Chutes and Ladders
In which popular video game series does a character named Wario serve as Mario's backward counterpart?	Super Mario
What word do the numbers 707 spell on an upside-down calculator?	LOL
What is the name of the fictional town where everything is backward in "SpongeBob SquarePants"?	Opposite Day Town
Which superhero comic book company published the character Bizarro, Superman's backward counterpart?	DC Comics

Upside-Down & Backwards Trivia

Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 1

What is the name of the wordplay where a sentence reads the same forward and backward?	Palindrome
Which famous race has a "backward run" version where runners run in reverse?	The London Marathon
What is "NASA" spelled backward?	ASAN
What is the last letter of the alphabet if you go in reverse?	A
In "Alice Through the Looking Glass," what type of world does Alice enter?	A mirror world
What is the opposite of "fast forward" on a remote control?	Rewind
What does the "Ctrl + Z" shortcut do on a computer?	Undo
What number is "321" backward?	123
What is the backward way to say "hello"?	Olleh
Which movie features a character who ages in reverse?	The Curious Case of Benjamin Button
What's the backward version of "cat"?	Tac
Which famous magician was known for escaping from things, seemingly in reverse?	Harry Houdini
In which sport do players commonly skate backward?	Ice hockey
Which driving maneuver involves moving a car backward?	Reverse
True or false? Pineapple upside down cake is baked with the pineapple rings on the top.	False
What do you call a race where people run backward?	Retro running
Which popular card game involves reversing the turn order with a special card?	Uno

Upside-Down & Backwards Trivia

Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 1

What shape is a lowercase "b" when written backward?	d
What is "stop" spelled backward?	Pots
Which holiday often involves playing tricks, sometimes reversing roles?	April Fool's Day
What is the name of the famous roller coaster that runs backward at Disneyland?	Expedition Everest (Disney World)
Which word is "evil" spelled backward	Live
What is "bat" spelled backward?	Tab
Which movie features a time loop where events repeat backward and forward?	Tenet
What is the name of the font that prints some letters in reverse, often used to prevent copying?	ZXX
Which sport often involves flipping and moving backward in mid-air?	Gymnastics
What is "robot" spelled backward?	Tobor
In which game do players flip pieces, sometimes turning them backward?	Othello (Reversi)
What is the name of the effect when people say words backward to mimic speech?	Reverse speech
Which famous nursery rhyme is about an old man who went to bed and bumped his head, making time feel reversed?	Hickory Dickory Dock
Which instrument can play notes in reverse when a recording is played backward?	Any instrument, but commonly piano or guitar
What is "knit" spelled backward?	Tink
Which famous actor played a character in a movie where time moved in reverse?	John David Washington (Tenet)
What is "dog" spelled backward?	God

Upside-Down & Backwards Trivia

Sermon on the Mount – Lesson 1

Which animal's name is the same forward and backward?	Otter (or Bob, if considering names)
What is the term for words that have opposite meanings in different contexts, like "cleave"?	Contronyms