

HOW BLESSED ARE YOU? by Angela Stauffer and Carol Duerksen

KEY VERSE:

Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven, for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

Luke 6: 21-23

FAITH STORY:

Luke 6:17-26

FAITH FOCUS:

This passage tells of Jesus healing the sick and those infested with evil spirits, and he blesses all of those who hunger, who are poor, who weep, and those who are hated by humanity for the sake of Christ. Jesus tells the people to be happy when they suffer because they have something to look forward to. Then he turns to the rich, the well fed, those filled with laughter, and those who are well liked and tells them to be careful because they have already received the good things in this lifetime.

SESSION GOAL:

To challenge students to think about how blessed they are, and to share those blessings; but also to think about how blessed they AREN'T if they haven't taken risks and experienced persecution for Jesus' sake.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, the students will:

- know the blessings and woes as stated by Jesus
- know the reward for those who suffer for Jesus
- identify what categories they think they are in now or have experienced.

MATERIALS NEEDED AND ADVANCE PREPARATION:

- 1 snacks
- 2 Monopoly bills
- 3 A book of jokes or a DVD or CD with a comedian on it.
- 4 Slips of paper—1/3 say FOOD, 1/3 say FUN, and 1/3 say MONEY. You should have one paper per person so that you will end up with three equal-sized groups—one group that is FUN, one is FOOD, and one is MONEY.
- 5 Bible for each student.
- 6 Paper and pencils for each student
- 7 Copies of the student worksheet
- 8 A candle or oil lamp

SESSION OUTLINE

FOCUS: (10–12 minutes)

Welcome students and as they arrive, give each one a slip of paper. When all students are present, ask them to get into their groups based on what their paper says.

Give the FOOD group the snacks that you brought and invite them to enjoy the food. Give the MONEY group the Monopoly money and invite them to dream of what they would do with it if this was real money. Give the FUN group the jokes or the DVD/CD with the comedian and invite them to enjoy the humor.

After a few minutes, ask groups to trade. Give them several minutes, then trade one more time.

CONNECT: (2–5 minutes)

Say: Today's lesson is about having food, money, and good times in our lives. Do you think you are better off having these things or not having these things? Is there anyone here who thinks they would be better off NOT having these things?

(If any students say yes, invite them to explain why.)

Ask: *What do you think Jesus said about having food, money and good times? Discuss.*

EXPLORE THE BIBLE: (10–15 minutes)

Make sure every student has a Bible. Read the story as a group, asking for volunteers to read one verse until it is read. Then ask the students to close their eyes and just listen as you read it to them slowly and with passion so that they can get it in their heads.

Ask: *Which group are you in—the ones who are blessed or the ones to whom Jesus says “Woe to you”? Discuss their answers.*

Say: *Many of us in North America are very well off compared to many parts of the world. Most of us are also well off compared to the poor who live in our own nation. Being wealthy is not bad in itself, but being well off can cause problems because you don't have to trust and rely on God as much. Being wealthy can be a barrier to truly finding God. People who are poor have to put their trust in God and therefore many times have a closer relationship with Christ. This is not saying every poor person is saved and every wealthy person is not a Christian, but it is something to ponder and really look at. What do you think about this idea?*

APPLY: (10–15 minutes)

Share a mini-lecture with students, making the following points:

- When Jesus says “woe to the rich,” he isn't saying so because they are rich but rather because they trusted in their riches instead of on God.
- This passage tells those who are hungry, poor, and persecuted to take heart in knowing that God is in control and someday all of their trials, suffering, and pain will be worth it because they know Jesus and will be blessed in eternity.
- Jesus tells the rich and the well fed to beware because they have everything they need

to survive here on earth. Sometimes when we don't need anything we think we don't need God to take care of us either.

- This passage isn't bashing all rich people and isn't saying all poor people will go to heaven either. It's just saying that often rich people have a more shallow faith because they don't have to rely on God to take care of them where as the poor have to trust God for their next meal.

Hand out the paper and pencils. Ask students to think about the following questions and to respond on their paper with a drawing, doodle, poem, or to create something using their pencil and paper that symbolizes their thoughts on one or more of the questions.

- Have you ever been persecuted for your faith? When? How?
- Have you ever persecuted someone else for their faith? Why? How?
- What do you think the "Woe to you" is that Jesus might say to you?
- What do you think is the "Blessed are you" that Jesus might say to you?

Invite students to share their responses but allow them to pass if they don't wish to share.

RESPOND: (10–15 minutes)

Hand out the student worksheets and ask students to spend some time filling them out. Under the I AM BLESSED column, they should make a top ten list of blessings in their life. Under the WHAT? column they should write something they can do to share their blessings with others, or something they are willing to do as a result of this blessing.

After students have completed their sheets, light the candle or lamp and turn off the lights. Invite students to look at the candle/lamp as you read these closing words from Matthew 5:14-16:

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it under a bushel basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Go, and share the blessings that have been given to you.

INSIGHTS FROM SCRIPTURE:

Luke was a physician. He knew all about the importance of food and water. Throughout the whole book of Luke, he emphasizes helping the needy. In this passage, Jesus brings it up too, when he blesses those who are hungry. He says that God is in control and someday all of their trials, suffering and pain will be worth it because they trusted God.

Jesus sat with the rich and arrogant to show that he loved them, but he also preached to the haughty to beware of the consequences of their attitudes. When Jesus said woe to the rich, he wasn't saying so because they were rich but rather because they trusted in their riches instead of in God, and they weren't sharing their riches with the poor. Sometimes when we don't need anything we think we don't need God to take care of us either. This passage isn't bashing all rich people and isn't saying all poor people will go to heaven either. It's just saying that often times rich people have a more shallow faith because they don't have to rely on God to take care of them where as the poor have to trust God for their next meal.

WORKSHEET

I AM BLESSED....

SO....WHAT?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.