

Chapter 5:

The Gospel of Matthew: Jesus the Teacher

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to read Chapter 5, pages 144-169.
- Students were also asked to complete Chapter 4 Review Questions 1-14.
- Students were asked to journal about a Paschal Mystery experience they have had.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Share and discuss the students' responses to Chapter 4 Review Questions which they completed prior to this session. Answers may be found on pages 105-106 of the Teacher's Manual.
- Ask students to review their journal entries about the Paschal Mystery. Invite any students who are willing to do so to share. It can be helpful if the leader opens the door by sharing a story from his or her own life.
- Read aloud the well known essay, *Footsteps in the Sand*, as an opening prayer for the class.

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord.

Across the dark sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to him and the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life. This bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it,

Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me.

The Lord replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints in the sand, it was then that I carried you."

Part 1:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Attitudes of Being, Background on Matthew's Gospel (pages 145-154)

- Using pages 148-149 as a guide, have students add to the posterboard from the previous week, noting the authorship, audience, date, purpose, and themes of Matthew's Gospel.
- Maryknoll (available online at maryknoll.org) has posters illustrating the Beatitudes in English and Spanish. These can be useful in helping students recognize a contemporary meaning in the Beatitudes. If you have these posters available, have students discuss their interpretation of each photograph.
- Choose a good reader to read aloud "Attitudes of Being" on page 145 aloud. Lead a discussion about the degree to which people can determine their own happiness. Invite them to consider how God's grace would also be necessary in order to find serenity amidst truly challenging circumstances. Ask students to share examples of people who meet difficult circumstances with courage.
- Review the Beatitudes on page 147 with the students. As a group, come up with two or three real-life examples for each Beatitude. Then divide the students into groups. Have each group rewrite the Beatitudes in their own words. Going through each Beatitude, have each group read their paraphrase and select the best one.
- Divide the students into eight groups and distribute poster paper and art supplies to each group. Assign each group one of the Beatitudes. Have them create a poster, using the paraphrase of the Beatitude as a title.
- Have students imagine that they are traveling as missionaries to a country where very few people have heard of Christianity. They will be cut off from regular communication from their home, and the only book they can bring is a Bible. The people they will be serving practice polygamy, and they are commonly very harsh in the way they discipline their children. Divide students into small groups, and distribute five pink and five blue 3x5" note cards to each group. On the pink note cards, have the students write what they consider to be the

five most important things people should know about Jesus and his message. On the blue notecards, have them write five actions they think might be necessary for people to make in order to be baptized (these could be studying about Jesus, having only one wife, attending Bible study, etc.). When everyone is finished, have the entire group decide which five pink and five blue cards are most important. Using page 150 as a reference, show the students the purpose behind the writing of Matthew's Gospel.

- Have students do the agree-disagree continuum exercise on page 115 of the Teacher's Manual. Help students make the connection between the discussion and the main themes of the Beatitudes.

Break/Writing Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Have students journal about an outstanding teacher they have experienced. After reflection, ask students to brainstorm the qualities that make a teacher effective.

Part 2:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Jesus the Teacher, Jesus Challenges Judaism (pages 154-167)

- Divide students into eight groups. Assign each group one of the passages from the Gospel of Matthew listed on pages 156-158:
 - Christians are the salt of the earth and light of the world (5:13-16)
 - Christians observe a new standard of law (5:17-48)
 - We must not murder (5:21-26)
 - We must not commit adultery (5:27-30)
 - We must not take idle oaths or swear (5:33-37)
 - We must not seek revenge (5:38-48)
 - Christians have a right attitude (6:1-34)
 - Christians do not judge others and they pray in trust (7:1-29)
- Have each group develop a plan for effectively teaching the portion of Jesus' message assigned to them, using the criteria they established for an effective teacher. Then pair the groups, and have them teach their lessons to one another.
- Review with students the understanding of parable described on pages 160-161. Show a segment of the movie *Godspell* to the group, illustrating one of the parables. Divide the students into groups. Assign each group to review one of the parables listed on page 161, and determine its core message. Then have each group write their own brief parable illustrating the same point. Have students act out their own parables for the group.
- Ask a student to read Matthew 16:18-19 aloud. Review with students Jesus' instructions about Church listed on pages 163-164. Facilitate a discussion on the exercise on Church found on page 164. Help them identify parishes which truly pattern themselves on these instructions. Invite students to talk about the ways in which a strong parish can influence and support their faith.
- Have students take turns reading Matthew 25:14-46 aloud. Facilitate a discussion with students about judgment and the afterlife. Many students find the concept of hell incompatible with a loving God. Ask them to recall an incident where one person has forgiven another, but the offender refuses to accept the forgiveness and repair the relationship. Hell can be understood as an ongoing refusal to accept God's love, and in allowing freedom to choose God must allow freedom to ultimately refuse love.
- If discussion the previous week revealed confusion among students about anti-Semitism, reinforce the lesson with the material on page 166. Invite a speaker to the class to talk about present-day Judaism. As an alternative, bring a copy of a *haggadah*, or Passover celebration script, and compare the prayers with the liturgy of the Eucharist, reminding students of Catholicism's strong roots in Judaism.
- Close this study session with reading Matthew 22:34-40, on the Great Commandment. Ask students to prepare for prayer by recalling an example they have seen recently of a person living out these words of Jesus.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes)

- Set up prayer space, with candle, Bible, and prayer table.
- Review with students the reflection on the "Our Father" on pages 170-171. Have them prepare for prayer by journaling responses to the questions presented in the text.

- Have students quiet themselves. Then play for them a sung version of the Our Father, or play quiet music in the background as you slowly and reverently recite the Lord's Prayer. Allow time for quiet reflection, and then invite students to ask God's blessing on people and intentions they are concerned about.

Conclusion (5 minutes):

- Assign Chapter 5 Review Questions 1-7 and 10-11.
- Direct the students to read Chapter 6, pages 172-201.
- Assign students to bring in a news story—from a magazine, newspaper, or the Internet—on a conflict in the Middle East. Assign a few students to instead gather information on the treatment of women in some countries in the Middle East.