



On your marks

What follows is a simple game, which is often used in a drama workshop. Here it introduces the beatitudes from the sermon on the mount.

Get set

No particular props are needed. It will be helpful to have some versions of the Beatitudes printed out for discussion by the group after the game.

Go!

1 Divide your group into two and have them stand in two lines facing each other across the meeting area, each with a direct opposite number. Give a number to each person so that two different numbers are opposite each other. Alternatively use letters of the alphabet.

2 The idea is now that, on a signal from the leader, the two lines should advance towards each other to greet their opposite numbers. However, rather than using real words as a greeting and response, they should only use their repeated letter or number with an appropriate tone, pitch, expression or emotion, as directed.

3 Work through an example. One of the two should say 'how are you' and the other should say 'I'm fine', but not using those words but by repeating their letter or number in a way that expresses that question and response.

Ask for some willing pairs to do this on their own to show the others what it might sound like. Now ask them to greet each other in the same way using the letters and numbers but with a snobbish tone to their greeting; or like robots; or extremely politely; or, as if they are very elderly people; or in a suspicious way!

It is fun discovering how many different ways they can use just numbers or letters that carry quite different feelings or emotions with them.

4 Once they are happy with the technique, then ask them to do this again but in the following pairs of contrasting moods, which pick up the paradoxes in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11). For example:

Greet each other as rich people and then as poor people
Greet each other as proud people then as compassionate people
Greet each other as aggressive people then as peacemaking people
Greet each other as sad people then as joyful people
Greet each other as bossy people then as humble people
Greet each other as frightening people and then as fearful people
Greet each other as smug people then as desperately hungry people



5 Explain how Jesus' teaching picked up on amazing contrasts like this. To everyone's surprise it was the second group in each pair who he said were closest to knowing God and being blessed by God. People still find this shocking today. What do the children think Jesus was trying to say?

6 Read through the beatitudes in different translations. Include for example how they are expressed in *The Message* version of the Bible. Here are two other versions, which might help the group think through what Jesus was trying to say:

A.
You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.
You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the one dearest to you.
You're blessed when you're content with just who you are-no more, no less. At that moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.
You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.
You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being care-full, you find yourselves cared for.
You're blessed when you get your inside world -your mind and heart- put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.
You're blessed when you can show people how to co-operate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.
You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's Kingdom.

B.
Good on you who struggle to believe, God's home is open to you.
Good on you who feel worthless, God's welcome is there for you.
Good on you who get walked on, God's gifts are given to you.
Good on you who long that things be better, God's reward belongs to you.
Good on you who keep on doing good, God's goodness will come for you.
Good on you who try to do your best, God's smile is turned on you.
Good on you who look for ways to make peace, God's embrace is waiting for you.
Good on you who against all odds stay faithful, God's home is open to you.

7 These expressions of what God values turn upside down the ideas of what most people think will bring true happiness.

I wonder what the group thinks of some of these statements?
I wonder if Jesus is really being practical here?
I wonder if anybody has ever really lived out these sorts of values?
I wonder which of these Beatitudes is the most important?

8 You could end the session by repeating the game from earlier, but this time everyone should cheer



loudly when the greeting is done in the manner that Jesus says is blessed, namely the poor people, the compassionate people, the peacemaking people, the humble people, the hungry people and the fearful people.