



# The Sermon on the Mount

**Pathway Point:** 🔄 Following Jesus' teaching changes our hearts for good.

**In-Focus Verse:** "One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them" (Matthew 5:1-2).

## Travel Itinerary

These verses lead into a teaching by Jesus that's considered by most biblical scholars to be the greatest sermon of all time—the Sermon on the Mount.

As more and more people flocked to hear Jesus speak, the group grew into a great crowd. The fact that so many people were drawn to Jesus illustrates their longing for direction, their need for something more in life. Jesus recognized their needs and spoke to their hearts.

He went up the side of a mountain, stopped, and sat down. A mountain was the perfect place for public speaking, because everyone could see and hear the person addressing the crowd. And it was common in this era for Jewish teachers to sit as they taught.

It's interesting to note that the Sermon on the Mount focuses on internal changes. It focuses on what's inside our hearts—and how we demonstrate these character qualities as followers of Jesus. Jesus' revolutionary teaching was this: Our actions alone aren't enough to save us (directly opposed to what the religious leaders of the time were focused on). It's what's inside our hearts that matters to God. And it's those internal changes that cause us to act in certain ways and not in others.

As you're experiencing this lesson with kids, remember that we all can act more kindly, more friendly, and more like others want us to. But true change comes from within, when we take Jesus' words to heart and let his love shine through us.

### Items to Pack:

stick-on nametags, pens

### DEPARTURE PRAYER

(up to 5 minutes)

Kids have fun exploring the idea of having a different name and consider what kinds of things might alter their lives.

Say: **Have you ever wished you could have a different name? Like maybe the name of someone famous? Or a silly name like “Cheese Pizza”? Or maybe you’d want to have a name that’s easier to spell than yours. If you could change your name, what would you change it to?**

**For me, I’d change my name to...**

Briefly share what you would change your name to if you had the opportunity. Feel free to make it a funny name so kids see they can have fun with this experience.

After offering your new name, say: **Okay, now it’s your turn. Tell what you’d change your name to if you had the chance.**

Let each child tell what he or she would choose for a different name.

Then give each child a nametag and a pen.

Say: **Just for today, let’s change our names. Write the new name you’d choose on this nametag and put it on. For our time today, we’ll call each other by these new names. So whenever you’re talking to other kids today, use only the name on their nametag.**

Allow time for everyone to make a new nametag and put it on. Don’t forget to wear a new nametag yourself. Begin calling kids by their new names right away, and try to use the names throughout the entire lesson.

Ask: • **How could having a different name change the way people treat you?**

• **Explain whether you think having a different name would change who you are.**

Say: **Thanks for sharing your thoughts. Today we’re going to talk a lot about changes. But not just changes in our names. We’ll also be discovering what can change within our hearts. Let’s talk to God about this.**

Pray: **Dear God, you know each of us here by name. You know the name our parents gave us, and you know the new names we’ve just given ourselves.**

**You also know what things need to change in our hearts and in our lives. Help us learn today what it means to have a changed heart,**

### TOUR GUIDE TIP

When you share appropriately from your life, kids get to know you as an authentic person. You draw them into the lesson and make what you’re teaching more relevant to their lives. Plus, you model the sort of response you hope to hear from them.

### TOUR GUIDE TIP

If you have more than 12 children, have children form groups of four or five. This lets every child have the chance to talk if he or she is willing—that’s hard to have happen in a large group.

and how  following Jesus' teaching changes our hearts for good. In Jesus' name, amen.



(up to 10 minutes)

## Quick Change

Kids make small changes in their appearance and observe what others have changed—all to discover that real change isn't on the outside, but in our hearts.

Say: **We've changed our names, and that's going to make our time together a little more fun—and a little more challenging as we try to remember one another's changed names. But what else can we change? We can change how we look.**

**I'll go first.**

Have all the kids turn their backs to you for a moment. While their backs are turned, change one small thing about your appearance. For example, you might remove a clip from your hair, undo a button on your jacket, untie your shoe, or something else that's quick and easy.

When you're ready, have kids turn back to face you.

Ask: • **Describe what's different or changed about me.**

Allow kids time to look for what you might've changed and call out their ideas. When someone says the correct thing, congratulate that child on his or her observant eyes.

Say: **Now let's all try it.**

Have each child find a partner, and have the pairs stand facing each other. If you have an odd number of children, partner with one of the kids yourself.

Say: **Take a really good look at your partner so you'll know what's changed.**

Give kids a minute, and then have them turn so they're standing back to back and can't see what the other person's doing. When kids are ready, explain that they'll all change one small thing about their appearance. Offer a few suggestions on simple things kids can change, such as pulling up or pushing down socks, taking off glasses, buttoning a sweater, and so on.

Wait a moment while everyone gets ready, and then have kids turn to face each other.

Ask: • **What about your partner changed? Tell your partner what you see that's different.**

After everyone has figured out the changes their partners made, have kids find new partners and play again.



Several people's names changed in the Bible.

For example, Abram changed to Abraham, Sarai to Sarah, Jacob to Israel, and Saul to Paul. These name changes reflected an important change that God had in store for these people.



Then gather everyone together and ask:

- **Describe how good you were at changing things about your appearance.**
- **What did you do to change your looks?**
- **Describe how observant you were when it came to noticing what was different about your partner.**
- **Tell whether you noticed the changes immediately or if it took you a little time to notice what was different.**

Say: **Thanks for practicing your skills at observation—and for being willing to make a few changes in how you look. If we pay close attention, we can get pretty good at seeing how people change on the outside.**

Ask: • **But what about the inside? For example, if I change my attitude from happy to sad, how would you be able to tell?**

Let kids share ideas on how an internal change might be noticed, such as a change in your facial expression or a change in your actions.

• **What if I changed from being a mean person to being a kind person? How might you be able to tell?**

Say: **People can usually figure out the changes we've made inside our hearts by our actions. But how do we change what's inside our hearts? Today we're discovering that following Jesus' teaching changes our hearts for good. Let's keep exploring that idea with another activity.**

### Items to Pack:

Bible, large sheets of poster board and markers or a whiteboard and markers

### STORY EXCURSION

(up to 15 minutes)

### Text Messages

Kids play an updated version of the old game Telephone as they discuss what it means to have a changed heart.

Say: **There's a game called Telephone that a lot of your parents probably played when they were younger. In this game the first person in a line would whisper something into the next person's ear, and then people repeated the message down the line to see whether the message would be the same at the end of the line.**

#### Let's try it!

Have kids line up side by side.

Whisper a silly sentence that'll be a challenge to repeat into one child's ear. For example, "I ate a sauerkraut burger for brunch, then washed my car with a

giant mug of root beer.” Don’t repeat the phrase—just have the child repeat it to the best of his or her ability into the ear of the next child.

Continue down the line, and have the last child in line say aloud what he or she heard to the entire group.

Say: **These days we don’t use telephones for talking as much—the majority of us text instead of talk on the phone. So let’s change this game a little to be more like texting.**

Write one of the following sentences on the poster board or whiteboard in large letters. You can also use a sentence you create yourself—just be sure that the words you choose can’t be easily changed into offensive words.

- We rushed to the store to buy video games that were on sale.
- Please feed the dog before you ride the bus to school.
- Mom said I can have three candies after I eat my carrots.

Say: **Have you ever sent a text message and spelled a word wrong? Or perhaps the phone you were using tried to guess what you were going to type and autocorrected your word to something that wasn’t what you meant to say.**

**These little changes can make the message different from what we meant to say. Let’s try that with this sentence I’ve written here. What if we changed just one letter in one word? How could that change the meaning of the sentence?**

Let kids play around with this and make different suggestions. You can start by changing just one letter in a word or two—and then make more changes a little at a time. If you’re using a whiteboard, you can easily replace a letter here and there and kids can see the new message. If you’re using a poster board, you can still write the new word in above the old one.

These changes might lead to sentences such as...

- We gushed to the shore to buy video names that were on bale.
- Please seed the hog before you hide the pus to school.
- Mop said I can rake three sandies after I ear my parrots.

Have fun laughing together about the new silly sentences you’ve created by making small changes.

Ask: • **What do you think was the funniest change we made—and why?**

• **How did such a tiny change—just making one or two letters different—make such a big difference?**

• **Can you think of other things that are changed in a big way with just a tiny change?**

An example of this you could share with kids might be a change of direction. If a car is driving in a straight line and the driver moves the steering wheel just a teensy, tiny bit, at first it won't make much of a difference, but within a minute the driver will be in a different lane, and then driving off the road! A super tiny change in direction can lead to a huge change in what happens.

Say: **Little tiny changes can make a great big difference, can't they? This is like the changes that happen in our hearts when we follow Jesus.**

Open your Bible to Matthew 5:1-2.

Say: **The Bible tells us about one time Jesus taught a great big crowd. We're going to be learning more about the important things he said in that talk to the people in the next few weeks. Today let's read Matthew 5:1-2 and see how Jesus' talk started.**

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

**In Bible times they didn't have microphones so everyone was able to hear a speaker. So going outside and sitting on the side of a mountain was a great way to communicate. Everyone could see Jesus sitting a bit higher on the mountain, and they could hear his voice. He sat down, his followers gathered around, and Jesus started teaching them.**

**The people really wanted to hear what Jesus said. They knew he had something important for them to hear. But if they just listened to the words he said, but didn't *do* anything...what do you think would happen?**

Allow kids to think about this and discuss their thoughts.

Say: **I'm sure we can all think of a time when someone, maybe a parent, told us to do something, and even though we heard their words we didn't follow what they said. I can think of a time...**

Tell about a time from your life when you didn't follow someone's good guidance and what happened as a result. Keep your example appropriate to the ages of the kids in your group. For example, you might tell about a time a coach told you what to do during a game and you ignored that and then lost the game—or a story along those lines.

Say: **Hearing someone and ignoring that person doesn't change our hearts. But when we really listen and  follow Jesus' teaching, it changes our hearts for good.**



(up to 10 minutes)

## Filled-Heart Sandwiches

You'll all make a snack together, changing the shape of the bread and filling it with good things.

Have kids wash their hands or use hand sanitizer to clean up before you begin this snack.

Say: **It's time for a snack—and this is one that'll keep us talking about how following Jesus' teaching changes our hearts for good.**

Demonstrate how to take one slice of bread and use a heart-shaped cookie cutter to make a heart-shaped piece of bread.

Then have kids work together so that each gets a paper plate with two slices of bread. Take turns using the heart-shaped cookie cutters so each child ends up with two heart-shaped pieces of bread.

Show kids the different toppings. Let each child choose a topping or two to spread on one of the heart shapes, then have kids place the other heart on top to create a simple sandwich. Have kids wait to eat until everyone's finished. Those who finish first can help kids who are still working.

Ask kids to return to their seats with their plates and sandwiches. Let a child who's willing thank God for the snack.

Ask: • **Looking at everyone's sandwiches around you, explain whether you can tell what's inside those hearts.**

Say: **We changed the shape of our bread into hearts—and put something good inside each heart. Some of the hearts have the fillings oozing out—so it's easy to tell what's inside. Others might have a topping that's harder to see from the outside. We'd have to open up the sandwich to see what's in those hearts.**

Let everyone begin eating as you continue.

Ask: • **How do you think others can tell what's inside our hearts?**

• **In what ways do our actions reveal what's in our hearts?**

Say: **It's true that our actions tell people more about our hearts than anything else. Our actions can let others know that we're Jesus' followers.**

After kids finish their snacks, invite them to help you clean up the area, throwing away plates and putting away supplies. Thank everyone for helping.

### Items to Pack:

bread; several heart-shaped cookie cutters; various toppings such as butter, jelly, honey, or cheese slices; paper plates; plastic knives

**ALLERGY ALERT** ▶ Check with parents about allergies and dietary concerns, and post a copy of the "Allergy Alert" sign (at the end of this book) where parents will see it.



Use toppings kids might enjoy. Cream cheese, leftover frosting, jam, dip, chocolate spread—even if you think it's odd, kids might want to give it a try. You don't need enough of each topping for every child—just a variety of toppings so kids can create a filling they think is tasty.



Cut a slice of the bread with the cookie cutters ahead of time to ensure the bread cuts easily. If the bread doesn't cut easily, bring a sharp knife to help trim off the edges around the cookie cutter. Keep the knife safely away from kids so you're the only one with access to it.



Save the remaining scraps of bread and take them home to make bread pudding, croutons, or bread crumbs. Or if you prefer, you can use them to feed the birds at a local park.



(up to 10 minutes)

## All Ears

Kids make a craft that—when folded properly—changes from a picture of a child to a heart.

Say: **Let's make something to help us remember that following Jesus changes our hearts for good—and to give us ideas of actions that show we follow Jesus.**

Give each child a copy of the “All Ears” handout.

Say: **Let's think of actions that would let others know that our hearts have been changed for good because we're following Jesus.**

With kids, brainstorm actions that might show others that they're following Jesus. Keep the direction of ideas realistic, guiding the conversation to ideas that kids actually might do. For example:

- letting a sibling go first when playing a game,
- thanking a parent for making dinner,
- feeding a pet when asked,
- helping wash dishes without being asked, and so on.

After you've talked about a variety of options, have kids each choose two or more ideas that they believe are realistic to do in the coming week.

Say: **When you've decided on a few things that you think you can do this week to let others know you're following Jesus, write or draw those on the ears of your person on the handout.**

Older kids can help younger ones who need help writing.

Say: **Writing the words on our ears is a fun way to remember that we've listened to Jesus' teaching—it's gone into our ears!**

When kids have finished writing, hold up your paper and demonstrate how to fold the page properly:

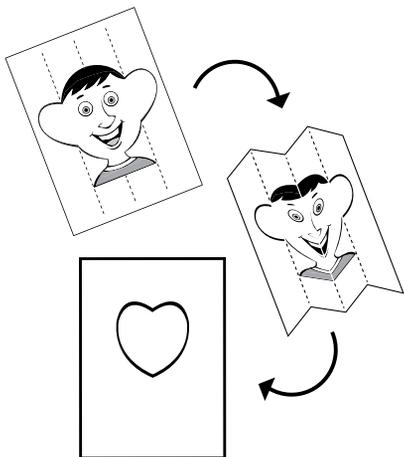
- Fold the page in half so the narrow ends touch.
- Fold back the two sides along the indicated line.
- When you put the two edges together (as shown in the illustration on this page) the ears of the person form a heart.

Help kids fold their papers properly and have fun showing how the face changes into a heart.

Ask: **• In what ways can this help us remember that following Jesus' teaching changes our hearts for good?**

### Items to Pack:

1 copy per child of the “All Ears” handout (at the end of this lesson), crayons or markers, scissors (optional), Travel Journals



Say: **Thanks for sharing your ideas! It's fun to see this face change from ears that listen—to a heart that shows that we follow Jesus.**

If time permits, let children color the faces. If kids in your group can use scissors, they may cut out the face along the heavier lines.

When kids finish, they can place their "All Ears" souvenir in their Travel Journals. Collect the Travel Journals, and put them away till next week.

**HOME  
AGAIN  
PRAYER**

(up to 5 minutes)

Kids experiment with water by adding salt to make an egg float.

Say: **Let's try one more thing that makes a change.**

Pour water into the glass so it's more than half full—but leave room to add the egg.

Invite one child to gently place an egg in the water. (You have an extra egg in case there are any accidents.)

The egg will sink to the bottom of the glass. You can add a bit more water at this time if you like, but the glass doesn't need to be completely full.

Say: **This egg sank right to the bottom of the glass. That's kind of like what happens when we have a "sinking" feeling. For example, your best friend says his family is moving away to another state. You get a sinking feeling in your stomach. Or, you thought you did really great on your spelling test, but when you got it back there was a big D on it. Yikes! That causes a sinking feeling. What are other things that might make you have a sinking feeling?**

Let kids offer their own "sinking" feelings.

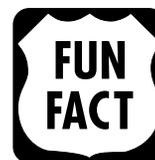
Say: **Thanks for sharing. You know, one thing that can give us a sinking feeling is when we know what Jesus wants us to do—because we've listened to his teaching—but we don't obey. That can really give us a sinking feeling. Let's talk to God about that right now. Let's tell God we're sorry for the times that we don't obey and get that sinking feeling.**

Pray: **Dear God, thanks for listening to us, and thanks for teaching us and changing our hearts. We want to tell you we're sorry for the times we do things that don't show others we follow you. Those things give us a sinking feeling. Please forgive us for those times. In Jesus' name, amen.**

Ask: • **Explain whether you think there's any way to get this egg to float—to get rid of that sinking feeling.**

**Items to Pack:**

2 or 3 washed, raw eggs  
(check that the shells don't  
have any cracks); 1 tall  
clear glass; long spoon;  
water; salt; tablespoons;  
paper towels



By adding salt, you're making the water more dense. As you add more salt, the water becomes more and more dense, to the point where the egg will float.



Yes, involving kids in this experiment increases the risk that an egg will break. But it's so much more fun and engaging for them if they get to participate rather than just watch you. Invite different children to add and remove the egg, to add and stir the water, and so on. Have paper towels on hand and bring along one or two extra eggs just in case one does break. The more relaxed you are about it, the more fun everyone will have—and the more the content of this lesson will stick. It's likely they will show this activity to their family at home—and will remember the Pathway Point as well!

- **What are your ideas?**

Listen to kids' suggestions. They might suggest cracking the egg or using a hard-boiled egg. Explain that none of these ideas will make the egg float.

Say: **What we need to change is the water. Let's experiment.**

Gently remove the egg from the water and set it aside. Let one child add about three tablespoons of salt into the water, have another child stir it well (the water will be cloudy), and then invite a different child to gently return the egg to the water. It's likely that the egg will still sink—but it's fun to experiment.

If the egg sinks, let kids gently remove it and add another three tablespoons of salt. Invite a different child to stir the water (again, it will stay cloudy) and then return the egg to the water. At this point, it should float. (If not, add another round of salt.) Amazing!

Ask: • **What made the difference so the egg would float?**

- **How is adding salt to the water like adding Jesus' teachings to our hearts and actions to get rid of that sinking feeling?**

Say: **This is a change we can see, just like others will be able to see the change in our lives when we follow Jesus' teaching. You can show this experiment to your family and let them know that 🎯 because you're following Jesus' teaching, your heart is changed for good.**

**Let's thank God for taking away the sinking feeling and changing our hearts for good.**

Invite any kids who want to thank God for what he's done in their lives to pray. If no one volunteers, you can pray, thanking God for each of the children and the changes that God is making in their lives as they follow Jesus.

Encourage kids to come back next week ready to tell you how following Jesus has made a change in them.

# All Ears

