Session 1
Blessed are the poor in spirit

Children can learn to rely on God in their everyday lives. They already know that they rely on adults to care for them. Even though they may feel small in society, in God's kingdom they are great. They can readily give and receive God's love. They can learn to pray to God at any time of day. To be poor in spirit means an attitude of humbleness and recognizing our dependency upon God. When we are poor in spirit, we have room for God's spirit to enter our lives.

BIBLE TEXTS
Matthew 5:3; Luke 18:9-14

FAITH CHALLENGE
We need God.

ADVANCE PREPARATION
- Read through the entire session, and decide what you will do.
- Set up the room/space for the various activities.
- Gather props for the story: robe, cloth bag with money.
- Practice telling the Bible story.
- Gather supplies for the activities you choose to do.
- Prepare a snack (see p. 13).

Kids Cluster
1. **Plan an activity for the early arrivals.** Check page 6 for ideas.
2. **Welcome the children** and gather for a time of singing (p. 8). Be sure to include action songs, familiar songs, favorite songs, and new songs.
Kids Explore

1. **Sing the theme song “Blest are they” (page 8).** Sing verse one and the chorus. Say a simple prayer.

2. **Introduce the theme of the day:** We need God.

3. **Open the Bible to Matthew 5:3.** Practice saying today's beatitude together. Use the ideas on page 11 to help with memorization.

4. **Talk about the Bible.**
   - What does it mean to be poor in spirit?
   - Why will people be happy when they are poor in spirit?
   - What is the kingdom of heaven?
   - How can we show that we are poor in spirit?

5. **Turn to Luke 18:9-14.** This story is a biblical example of needing God’s help. Jesus told this parable to people who trusted in themselves rather than in God. They thought that they were better than others. Being “poor in spirit” can mean relying on God for our daily strength instead of on ourselves. It means loving ourselves and others, and being willing to serve others.

   Two men went to the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector.

   The Pharisee stood by himself. He prayed like this: “God, thank you that I am not like the other people. I am not a thief. I am not even like this tax collector. I fast and pray twice every week and I give generously of the money that I make.”

   The tax collector was standing far away. He looked sorrowful and his hands were beating his chest. He prayed like this: “God, be merciful to me! I am a sinner.”

   Jesus said, “The tax collector went home justified and happy. The Pharisee didn’t. Everyone who exalts themselves will be humbled, and everyone who humbles themselves will be exalted.”

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**Tip**

Have the children act this story out as you tell it. This will help them to remember it better. Ask for two volunteers to be the Pharisee and the tax collector. Consider giving out simple props like a robe for the Pharisee and a cloth bag of money for the tax collector.
**BLESSING BANK**  
**INDIVIDUAL**  
Children will make a blessing bank filled with ways to bless others over the following week.

**Materials:** empty boxes, colored paper, markers, glue sticks, scissors

- Decorate the box to make a “blessing bank.”
- Decorate cards or slips of paper with ways that they could bless others. For example: “Rake leaves.” “Help make dinner.” “Tidy up.” “Visit a neighbor.” Make at least seven blessing cards.
- Put these cards into the bank.
- Each day of the week, children can draw a card from their bank and complete the blessing described on the card.

**KINGDOM OF HEAVEN WANDS**  
**GROUP**  
Children can have fun making these treats, imagining what special wands would look like in the kingdom of heaven.

**Materials:** bamboo skewers, colored sprinkles, mixing bowl, mixing spoon, baking sheet, star cookie cutters, 3 T / 45 ml margarine or butter, 40 large marshmallows, 6 cup / 1.5 L crispy rice cereal

- Mix melted marshmallows and butter.
- Stir in crispy rice cereal.
- Press onto a baking sheet.
- Cut the bars into star shapes using cookie cutters.
- Insert a bamboo skewer into each star. *Shake colorful sprinkles onto each side.

**FROG CRAFT**  
**INDIVIDUAL**  
When we are poor in spirit, we learn to “Fully Rely On God” (FROG). Children will make these frogs to remind them to trust in God for their needs.

**Materials:** green tempera paint, black tempera paint, white tempera paint, pie plate for paint, paint brushes, paper, markers

- Make two hand prints on the paper using green paint. These will be the frog’s feet.
- Paint a large green circle for the frog’s body.
- Paint two white oval shaped eyes above the body.
- Use black paint to make a mouth, nostrils, and pupils.
- At the bottom, use a marker to write “Fully Rely On God.”

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**Tip**  
The extended craft ideas on page 15 can be used each session.
**TASTE STATION**
*(INDIVIDUAL)*

**Materials:** small slices of dill pickle, cups, pitcher of water

- Eat a piece of dill pickle.
- Taste the sour pickle and suggest that this can remind us that it is not always easy to recognize that we need God's help.
- Take a sip of water and think of what the kingdom of heaven is like.

**EMPTYING RELAY**
*(GROUP)*

This game can be used to teach the message of the first beatitude. We are poor in spirit when we empty ourselves so that God can fill us.

**Materials:** four small buckets, foam packing peanuts, two long-handled spoons, two blindfolds

- Play a relay game in which the object is to be the first team to empty a bucket.
- Provide each team with two small buckets.
- Fill one bucket with packing peanuts or other material and set it at one end of the playing area.
- Place the empty container at opposite side of the room, at the starting line.
- Give each team a long-handled spoon and a blindfold.
- The blindfolded player must follow the directions shouted by teammates to direct him or her across the room to the correct bucket.
- Once there, the player removes a scoop from the bucket, returns to the team, and deposits the spoonful into the empty bucket.
- After teams have completed a rotation or time limit, the team who has emptied their bucket the most wins the game.

**TIP**
If the weather is agreeable, go outside and play an emptying relay using buckets of water and sponges. Dip the sponge in the water and carry it back to the start, where it is squeezed out.

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**WHAT’S IN YOUR HEART?**
*(GROUP)*

Children will play this simple game to reinforce the things that should be in our hearts.

**Materials:** ping-pong ball, large cup, words on small pieces of paper: love, peace, hatred, fear, joy, kindness, patience, impatience, meanness, unloving

- Place the papers printed with words into the cup.
- Children will take turns trying to throw a ping-pong ball into the cup from a short distance away.
- If a child gets the ball in the cup, he/she pulls out a word from the cup.
- The child decides whether that is a word that describes something that should be in our hearts.
- Keep the words that have been used out of the cup. Continue until all of the words have been used up.

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**Closing**

For closing ideas, see page 7.