

# The Beatitudes

## Blessed are the Persecuted

### **Ready** (*Plant the seed*)

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. –Matthew 5:10

### **Set** (*Get the conversation started*)

Jesus calls those blessed who are persecuted for righteousness. What does this mean? After Jesus was crucified, many of his followers began to spread his teaching. They were beaten, imprisoned and some were put to death. They were persecuted for the faith in Him. This is what Jesus was talking about. While that type of persecution does still go on in parts of the world, where you live, you will likely not find the same kind of situations. You will, however, find yourself in a position where you have to stand up for what is right and what you believe in. It may be against people you don't know, but it will probably be with your friends or those close to you. That will be harder. Jesus says that if you stand firm with Him and keep your faith no matter how hard it gets, you will be blessed and yours will be the kingdom of heaven. It will not be easy, but it will draw you closer to God and grow your faith; make you stronger.

To be a great athlete takes a lot of work. You need to practice and strengthen your body. Weight lifters work hard to create those large muscles. They lift heavy weights that gently strain and tear their muscles which then rebuild stronger and larger than before. They suffer in order to get stronger. When you push yourself to run that one more lap after you are already exhausted, you may feel like that was too much; but, at your next game, you will be able to run faster and last longer. That little bit of suffering strengthened you. Have you ever noticed that professional players getting teased or booed by the opposing team's fan never seem to let it get to them? In basketball, when a player is shooting free-throws, the spectators go wild trying to distract him, but they never seem to react. It probably wasn't always that way. Surely, they have built up to that level of focus. The Bible tells us to rejoice when we are facing trials, for the testing of our faith produces perseverance. (John 1:2-3)

### **Grow** (*Talk it over*)

- Have you ever worked so hard at something that you just wanted to give up?
- Have you ever been challenged because of your faith?
- How does your suffering compare to what Jesus went through on the cross?

### **Pray**

Father God, you are all powerful. We know that our suffering draws us closer to you and strengthens us spiritually. It can be hard to stand up for what we believe in and persevere through trials that challenge us, but we know that you are always with us. We thank you for this opportunity to grow in our faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Overtime** (*Team Building Game to Support Concept*) Mine Field Team Building Game

-Materials: Blindfold

-Give Directions: The goal of the game is to direct a blindfolded player successfully through the minefield. Set a course with one player as the navigator and the other players as the mines, sitting cross legged randomly between the navigator and the blindfolded player. Have the navigator give directions guiding the blindfolded player to him/her. If they run into a mine, they take that player's position and the mine becomes the blindfolded player.

-Say: *Wow! Great job navigator! You successfully moved your player through the minefield. That was a lot of pressure right? Good thing we have God to guide us through the tough things we can't see coming. God knows what is coming and will prepare you, just as the navigator guided you, if you listen for His direction. Through prayer and reading God's word you can prepare yourself for life's hardships.*