



S1.Lesson 26: Empathy

Middle School Lesson Plans

Supplies: TV or laptop to show movie clip (movie clip link is available at rfour.org/curriculum.html); 1 table for every 6 students; 1 die (singular for dice) per table; 1 pencil per table; two half-sheets of paper for every student.

OPENING PRAYER

TELL

- The film clip we're about to watch needs a little explanation before we watch it.
- First, this is based on a true story.
- The man in the suit and tie represents the president of Marshall University, Don Devon.
- He's there to interview Jack Lengyel (played by Matthew McConaughey) about a head coaching position for football.
- The reason Don Devon, the president of the university, is looking for a head coach is because four months earlier the football team's airplane crashed (this happened in 1971), killing everyone on-board, including the coaches and the athletic director.
- The president has been calling and asking coaches who were alumni (people who previously attended the school) to be the next coach.
- Everyone has said no. No one wants the job because there's no team, the town's hurting, the school's hurting and the decision to field another team was extremely controversial.
- But Jack Lengyel has called to inquire about the job, even though he's got his own coaching job and has ZERO ties to Marshall University.
- The president, because he's got no other options has come out to interview Jack.
- And that's the where the clip starts – with the interview.

WATCH We Are Marshall clip

ASK

- At the beginning of the clip, Don Devon is suspicious of Jack's motivations for wanting to coach the team. What is Jack's reason for wanting to coach the Marshall football team? (When he imagines losing his family, he imagines a lot of hurt. And if he thinks about a school and a town all going through that loss at the same time, then he wants to help out)

TELL

- Jack bases his decision on empathy.
- Empathy is when we are able to share another person's emotions and feelings.
- This is not an easy thing to do because first, we have to look at and be aware of ourselves and how we would feel when a certain event happens.
- We are going to read a scripture passage now that is often referred to as the "Good Samaritan" story.

READ Luke 10:25 – 37 (The Message)

25 Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. "Teacher, what do I need to do to live life the way God made us to live it?" 26 Jesus answered, "What's written in God's Law? How do you interpret it?" 27 The scholar said, "That you love the Lord your God with all your time and heart and mind and body - and that you love your neighbor as much as you love yourself." 28 "Good answer!" said Jesus. "Do it and you'll live fully."

29 Looking for a loophole, the scholar asked, "And just how would you define 'neighbor'?" 30 Jesus answered by telling a story. "There was once a Jewish man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead. 31 Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw the hurt man, he passed by on the other side. 32 Then a Levite religious man showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

33 "A Samaritan traveling the road came to the man. When he saw the man's condition, his heart went out to him. 34 He gave him first aid, disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his donkey, took him to an inn, and made him comfortable. 35 In the morning he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill - I'll pay you on my way back.'

36 Then Jesus asked, "What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the man attacked by robbers?" 37 "The one who treated him kindly," the religion scholar responded. Jesus said, "Go and do the same."

TELL

- To be a Samaritan in the 1st century means you are despised by those who are Jewish.
- To be a priest or a Levite in the 1st century is to be a moral, upstanding Jewish citizen who is honored and well-respected.
- So the parable of the Good Samaritan really challenges those who would've first heard the story because it's backwards/opposite of what was expected.

ASK

- The scholar asks the question, "What do I need to do in order to live life the way God made us to live?" In verse 27, what is the answer to the scholar's question?
- Looking at the first part of the answer (Love your God...with everything), does that seem extreme to you? Why?
- Looking at the second part of the answer (Love your neighbor...), does that seem easy to you?
- So, using the equation, if you love yourself very little, how much will you love your neighbor? (very little)
- How much, then, do you think that the priest and the Levite loved themselves? (not very much)
- In the movie clip, because Jack, the football coach, knows he wouldn't want to hurt as bad as the people at Marshall are hurting, what then does he decide to do?

TELL

- In the movie and the parable, the people who should've been most helpful were the least helpful.
- And those who were more suspicious were the ones who were the most helpful.
- The reason that the ones who should've been more helpful but weren't was because they were trying to protect themselves. They were thinking of themselves first.
- At first, protecting ourselves may seem like we're loving ourselves.
- And, true, self-protection is a form of love, but if we're busy protecting ourselves, then we can't love our neighbors as we're loving ourselves.
- We can't protect ourselves and others at the same time. Eventually we have to choose who we're going to protect more, ourselves or others.
- And when we choose to protect ourselves first, then football coaches become scarce and people pass the wounded without stopping to help.
- So that's why the first "law" of "Love your God with all your time, mind, body and heart" is so important.
- When we pay attention to God first, then that sets our priorities straight.
- And, when we seeking God first, then we are receiving God's love for ourselves, which then means we have love to share with others.

EXPLAIN Activity Roll-a-Six

- We're going to do an activity now that demonstrates how cutthroat things can get when we're just thinking about ourselves.
- Each person gets a piece of paper.
- As a group, we'll share this one pencil and one die/dice.
- We'll get in a circle around this table and then one of us starts the game by rolling the dice.
- Each person gets one roll and then we pass the dice to our right.
- We're trying to roll a six.
- Once someone rolls a six, that person takes the pencil and starts to number on their piece of paper from 1 to 100.
- The numbers must be written one at a time, in consecutive order, and must be legible.
- The person who is writing the numbers must **also count out loud** as they write their numbers down so that the group knows where they are in their number writing.
- While the person writes to 100, the dice continues to be rolled and passed around the circle.
- (The person who is writing is skipped)
- Once someone else gets a six, then the pencil is passed and *that* person starts to write on their paper from 1 to 100 and counting out loud as they write.
- Then, if the first person rolls a six again, then they take the pencil and continue writing to 100 from where they last stopped.
- For example, if you had to give up the pencil at number 15 and then you roll a six next time around, then the next number you would write down would be 16.

DO "Roll a Six" Activity

ASK

- As people got closer to 100, did the excitement level change?
- Did the stress of others getting closer to 100 change how we acted?
- How easy was it to get the pencil when it was your turn to write?
- Did you wait patiently for the pencil or want to pull it away from the other person when it was your turn?
- So what things would be different about this game if we were loving our neighbors as ourselves?
- What would this game look like if we praying and inviting God into our actions?
- Are you willing to try the game again, only this time paying attention to loving our neighbors as ourselves and praying?

If so...**DO** Activity Roll-a-Six

ASK

- Was that different than the first time?
- How?
- Did you think it was better or worse? (most likely the game was much more boring, but injuries to the body and to emotions would've been a lot less likely).

TELL

- So if you only cared about yourself, you'd be upset that the game was boring, right?
- But if you're thinking about others, then you want the game to be fun for everyone, right?
- Which then might lead to a different decision about what to do...which is what the Good Samaritan story is all about.

If there's time...

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- Who are the people who most stress you out or annoy you?
- What kind of reminders can you implement as a way to remember to pray when interacting with these individuals who stress you out?
- How might your interactions between you and this person(s) change that would let you know that you are treating the individual as a neighbor in a similar manner like the Good Samaritan treated the wounded man?

CLOSING PRAYER