

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by

rfour.org

Year 3: Session 4 – Jesus and the Crowd

Class 12: Mark 2:1-12 – The crowd is not in-sync with Jesus

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- The crowd watches Jesus but does not “synchronize with Jesus.” And because of this, they (unintentionally) block access to Jesus. Use example of sports -- the crowd has a spectator perspective, not a participatory perspective
- Compare the crowd’s spectator perspective with Jesus’ response to the four friends and the paralytic man.
- Introduce the Pharisees a little bit in this story; but focus more on Jesus’ perceptive nature and compare it, again, to the Crowd who are oblivious.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Some way to play and show movie clip on rfour.org site for this lesson (from *Seabiscuit*)
- One paper plate for everyone in the class (including teachers) plus one extra plate

THE LESSON

OPENING PRAYER

OPENING QUESTION

- For the opening question for today’s class, one of the teachers will ask the question and then to give you some time to think of an answer; the teacher asking the question will answer first.
- Once the teacher answers the question, we’ll go around the circle.
- When it’s your turn, start with your name and then answer the question to the best of your ability.
- Here’s this week’s question: *What is your favorite show or genre to watch on television/netflix/youtube? Why?*

INTRO

- This week is our 3rd story about Jesus and the crowd.
- Quick review: What are the three groups of people who surround Jesus? (The Pharisees, the Crowd and his disciples.)
- And, each of these groups has certain characteristics and how they interact with Jesus.

- This session has been about the characteristics of the crowd and how the crowd interacts with Jesus.
- The crowd, as we've seen, is demanding (it wants more time/healing from Jesus than Jesus can provide and chases him into the wilderness).
- The crowd also changes its mind quickly (loves Jesus and then tries to throw Jesus off a cliff within a 30 minute span).
- And today, we'll look at how the crowd gets in the way.
- Yes, the crowd watches Jesus, but it is not synchronized or "in-sync" with Jesus. We'll look at why that might be.
- Before we go any further, let's make sure we're on the same page as to what being "in-sync" or "synchronized" means. Any guesses? (means for a group of things or people to coordinate and/or operate with similar movements, ideas, goals, etc.)

TRANSITION to Movie

- To get started, we're going to watch a movie clip from "Seabiscuit."
- It's a movie about a race horse named Seabiscuit and the people who race Seabiscuit.
- Surprisingly enough, in the clip, we'll see a horse race.
- In the scenes before the race we're going to watch, the trainer, owner, and jockey all realize that their horse, Seabiscuit, runs best from behind the pack of horses because of its competitive spirit – it wants to catch up and pass the other horses.
- So that's their plan – to keep the horse behind the other horses until the very end of the race.
- Let's find out what happens.

VIEW Movie Clip

ASK

- Did the jockey keep Seabiscuit behind all the other horses? (no)
- Why? (because the jockey got mad about being pushed into the rail and then made the rest of the race about revenge)
- Did Seabiscuit win the race? (no)
- Was the trainer upset with the jockey? (Yes)
- Why? (because they had a plan that the jockey didn't follow)
- Was the jockey sorry about not following the plan? (Not really. Instead, he made excuses, "he FOULED me!")

TELL

- So what we see happening in the movie clip is that the owner, trainer and jockey have a plan.
- But then the jockey gets distracted/shifts his focus to something else (being fouled) – which causes him to no longer be *in-sync* with the owner, the trainer and the plan.
- And because the jockey gets out-of-sync with the plan, it costs him (and the team) the race.
- There's no race in today's scripture reading, but the concept of being in-sync versus out-of-sync will be quite prevalent in today's scripture story.
- Let's read the story and see what happens.

READ Mark 2:1-12 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

1 When Jesus returned to Capernaum with his disciples after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3 Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4 And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes and Pharisees were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, "Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk'? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— 11 "I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home." 12 And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

ASK (*answers are in parenthesis*)

- Is there anything you find interesting or weird about this story? [*to teachers: You don't necessarily need to answer what they notice or have questions about – sometimes just agree with a, "yep, that's interesting" or a, "Yeah, I find that to be weird, too" works*]
- Verse 1: Where was Jesus reported to be? (at home)
 - Are you surprised he has a home?
- Verse 2: How many people were there? (so many that there was no room for them; they were even crowded around the front door)
- Verse 2: What was Jesus speaking to them? ("the word" – i.e. The Good News. Jesus is teaching)
- Verse 4: Why can't the 4 friends get their friend to Jesus? (because the crowd is blocking them)
- Do the friends give up, though? (No)
- What do they do instead? (go on the roof, break through it and then lower their friend down to Jesus) (see first bullet point in TELL re: digging through the roof if students ask about it here)
- Verse 5: Is Jesus upset about his home's roof getting a hole put into it? (Nope, he doesn't seem to be upset about it at all)
- Verse 5: What does Jesus say instead? (Your sins are forgiven)
- Do you think the friends and the paralytic are expecting more than forgiveness of sins? (Probably)
- Verse 6 & 7: Would you consider the thoughts of the Pharisees as "positive" or "negative"? (seems pretty negative)
- Verse 8 & 9: Does Jesus ignore the Pharisees? (nope, he speaks directly against their negative thoughts – and even challenges them to change their minds if does more than "forgive" the man's sins)
- Verse 11 & 12 – What does Jesus do for the paralyzed man, then? (Heals him so that he can walk)
- Verse 12: What is the response of the crowd to what Jesus does? (amazed and glorified God saying "We have never seen anything like this!")

TELL

- Verse 4: Most houses had ladders on the outside to climb up on the roof. The roof was often a place for a person to be alone, to worship and pray, even a place to have special meetings. The roofs were typically made of a straw and mud mixture. This would have consisted of timbers, covered with brush or similar thatching, and topped with mud and straw. This was apparently a wide-spread construction technique, and it seems likely that the use of a small roller was used periodically after rain to smooth and compress the mud layer, making it progressively stronger.

This should make the digging of a hole in the roof make more sense. However, digging a hole through the roof would not have been considered usual or polite. Such a decision was an extraordinary attempt by the friends to get their friend to Jesus. [reference: <http://www.biblestudytools.com/encyclopedias/isbe/house.html?p=4> see section: II. 1. (10) roof]

- The tricky thing about the crowd is that it *is* curious about Jesus. It surrounds Jesus. And, the crowd seems to mostly like Jesus (like in verse 12).
- Because the crowd does these things, we might think that the crowd is a lot like the disciples. That the crowd is following Jesus.
- But that is not true. And this is important to remember: The crowd is not doing/living what Jesus is doing/teaching.
- Disciples wanted to be just like their teacher, but the crowd makes no such commitment.
- We see that difference in today's story. We see that Jesus welcomes the four friends whereas the crowd *blocks* the four friends from getting to Jesus.
- If the crowd was doing/living what Jesus doing/teaching, then it would've been aware of the need and plight of the four friends. The crowd would've helped or at least made a path for the friends. But it didn't.
- The crowd is not synchronized or in-sync with Jesus.
- Instead, what the crowd is doing is what most crowds do, especially at, say, sports games – they are watching and not participating. There is a big difference between watching football vs playing football. The crowd *watches*. The disciples *participate*.
- To help us see how the crowd is not doing what Jesus is doing, we can compare the crowd's lack of awareness and lack of help to Jesus' awareness of others and how he responds to them.
 - In verse 5, Jesus sees the faith of the four friends which prompts Jesus to tell the paralytic that his sins were forgiven. In other words, unlike the crowd, Jesus is addressing/directing his time and attention to the paralytic.
 - **Side note** (*in case it comes up*): Why did Jesus start addressing the paralytic re: forgiveness of sins? Tough to tell. Maybe he was provoking the Pharisees. Or maybe there were some signifiers that the friends and/or the paralytic were outcasts/considered unclean. Or maybe this was Jesus' way of saying, "It's okay that you just put a hole in my roof." Or, maybe Jesus also perceived that this is what the paralytic needed to hear first before being able to receive words of healing. Or maybe it was all those things combined. We don't REALLY know because the story doesn't tell us. But what the story DOES let us know is that this process that Jesus engages in with the paralytic works
 - In verse 8, Jesus is able to perceive the murmurings/internal resistance of the Pharisees AND he then responds to what they've been murmuring/internally resisting (again, unlike the crowd who seems mostly oblivious).
 - Finally, Jesus helps the paralytic in an observable way: Jesus physically heals him.

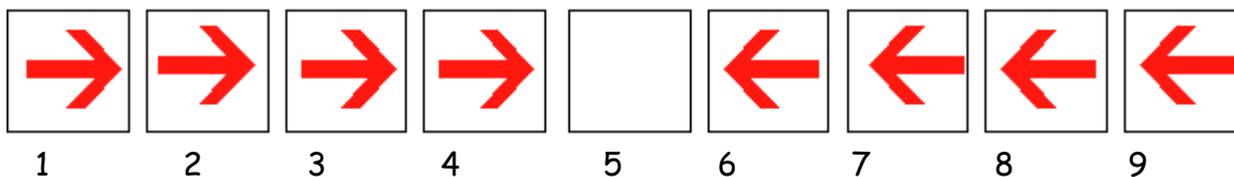
- If the crowd was in-sync with what Jesus was practicing and teaching, then they would responded somewhat similarly to the four friends like Jesus did. At the very least, they would not have been blocking the four friends from experiencing Jesus' teaching and healing.

TRANSITION to ACTIVITY

- To be fair to the crowd, being part of the crowd and exhibiting crowd-like behavior is pretty easy and can happen without our even knowing it.
- We're going to do an activity now that will hopefully demonstrate how crowd-like behavior (where we get out-of-sync) is easily accessible for all of us.

EXPLAIN ACTIVITY (idea for activity came from <http://mrgym.com/Cooperatives/TrafficJam.htm>)

- We will need two teams with an even amount of people (use teacher(s) to even out the teams).
- The two teams will line up and face each other by standing on these paper plates.
- There must be ONE paper plate that is not occupied by either team. That one plate will be the starting delineation point between the two teams.
- [For teachers only: The following is a simple representation of what the setup will look like. The arrows and numbers need not be on the plates. The arrows are there to show what way each team will be facing and the numbers help for explaining the solution – which is not needed for the students. Also there is no limit of how many people can be on a team. The more people there are per team, though, the more difficult the task becomes – 5 or 6 per side is great! 2 or 3 per side will probably be figured out pretty easily.]
- [If you have 4 or less students, have 9 paper plates with arrows and numbers on them, like below, and have the class figure out, together, how to move the plates]:



- The object of the activity is to get all of your team to the other side. In other words, people standing on numbers 1,2,3 and 4 must get to numbers 6,7,8, and 9.
- This is NOT a race. You do not lose if the other team finishes their task before you finish yours.
- This is a turn-based activity.
- The team on the right goes first (or feel free to make up some other arbitrary reason for why one team will go first)
- A team announces its turn is over by saying, "We've made our moves."
- A team may make as many moves as it wishes during its turn.
- Here is how you may and may not make moves:

Legal Moves

- A player must move to an unoccupied space in front of them. (you may not move backwards or turn around)
- You may move past a player facing the opposite direction to get to the empty space behind him/her.
- You can only move past 1 player at a time, and that player MUST be facing in the opposite direction.

Illegal Moves

- Players may not move backwards or turn and face the other direction.
 - Players may not pass anyone facing the *same* direction
 - A player may not pass more than one other player in a move.
- If a team cannot make a move because it got stuck, then both teams will have to start over.
 - Any Questions?

DO ACTIVITY (note: see the end of the lesson for solution to the activity – there's only one)

ASK

- Did you succeed on the first try? (it seems unlikely that they would have. The following questions are based on the assumption that they did not)
- If not, what stopped you from succeeding?
- Did you realize right away that you had to work with the other team in order to succeed?

TELL

- So in this activity, we see how it is pretty easy to not be in-sync with the other people around us (i.e. people on the other team) which then keeps us from being able to do what we're supposed to be doing.
- To not block each other, you had to synchronize your actions with the other team. You had to be in-sync with each other.
- And that's the difference between the crowd and the disciples.
- The crowd is not trying to be synchronized or in-sync with Jesus. They are not trying to match what Jesus is doing.
- And because the crowd is not trying to do what Jesus is doing, then they bump into each other, they get in the way, they even block other people from getting to Jesus.
- And that's the crowd: Demanding. Quick to change their mood and opinion about someone. Curious enough to watch, but not curious enough to participate, which can lead to the crowd being an obstacle.
- Next class, we'll start a session about the Pharisees.

CLOSING PRAYER

Solution to activity: The solution will be described by using the numbers under the squares with the arrows in them (on page 5). If you have trouble imagining the solution, I recommend placing some pennies and dimes on a paper and re-enacting it.

Team A: square 4,

Team B: square 6, square 7,

Team A: square 5, square 3, square 2,

Team B: square 4, square 6, square 8, square 9,

Team A: square 7, square 5, square 3, square 1,

Team B: square 2, square 4, square 6, square 8,

Team A: square 7, square 5, square 3,

Team B: Square 4, square 6,

Team A: square 5,

Notice the pattern Team A makes 1 move , Team B makes 2 moves, Team A makes 3 moves, Team B makes 4 moves, Team A makes 4 moves, Team B makes 4 moves, Team A makes 3 moves, Team B makes 2 moves, Team A makes 1 move. This pattern will lengthen or shorten depending on how many players there are per team.