

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by



Year 3: Session 6 – Jesus and his Disciples

Class 17: MT 16:21-25 – Jesus calls Peter “Satan”

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Brief review of what it meant to be a disciple in 1st century Israel
- Highlight our usual understanding of what “evil / bad / Satan” consists of.
- Compare our usual understanding of “evil” with Jesus’ understanding of “evil / bad / satan” in the MT 16 passage.
- Explore the idea of “sequence / priorities / order” that Jesus is putting forth in the passage.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Movie clip (from rfour.org)
- TV and equipment needed to play movie clip
- Way to display the sequencing activities. (Preferred way – show it on the TV screen. Or, have handouts available to pass out)

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:** *In a book, movie or TV show that you like, who is your favorite or least favorite villain?*

INTRO

- So in our previous lesson, we started a new session of stories about Jesus and his disciples
- One of the things we discussed was that Jesus was not the only teacher in his time. There were many teachers in his time and place.
- And, most of those teachers had disciples – in the Gospel of John, we learn that even John the Baptist had disciples.

- The idea of being a disciple in Jesus' time is that you would learn from your teacher (or "rabbi") by following the teacher, listening to the teacher, asking the teacher questions and doing what the teacher did.
- Like an apprenticeship.
- And, if you were a really good disciple, then you could go on to become your own teacher/rabbi
- Remember the story of Elijah being taken up in a chariot of fire? Elisha, his student, took Elijah's place after Elijah left. That's sort of how it worked in Jesus' time, too.
- Thinking of Jesus as a teacher, one of the things to think about is "What did Jesus teach his disciples?" And that's what we'll be talking about in this session.
- Last class we talked about how Jesus taught his students about prayer. This class we'll look at how Jesus teaches his disciples about "evil." (Then rub your hands together and laugh: Muwhahahah)

TRANSITION to Video Clip

- So how would you describe or define "evil?" (let the class throw out some ideas)
- Those are some good answers. Let's now watch a video clip that portrays (in a non-scary way) some of your answers about how we typically think about "evil" or bad things.
- The movie clip is from Despicable Me and the main character is named Gru. He's a career villain. And he wants to be the best villain in the world.
- In the movie clip, he will be revealing to his workforce (the minions!), his next diabolical plan. Let's see what it is...

VIEW Video Clip

ASK

- What are some "bad" things that we learn that Gru has done? (stolen the Jumbo-tron from Times Square. Stolen some landmarks...from vegas.)
- What is Gru's next big bad thing? (To steal the moon)
- Why do we consider these things "bad?" (because they affect other people; takes things that doesn't belong to him; the moon thing could be quite serious if we think about tidal patterns and orbits – though that's not really part of the movie – Gru is not trying to destroy the world – what he wants is money and infamy)

TELL

- The word "Satan" is often synonymous with "bad" or "evil."
- If we think of "Satan" at all, we sort of think of a villain's villain: An overlord of bad people and bad things.
- Sort of like a meaner Gru who leads his minions to do terrible things.
- In today's scripture passage, Jesus, somewhat sternly, teaches his disciples, Peter in particular, the difference between good and evil.
- However, Jesus' definition of "good" and "evil" may surprise you.
- Let's see what happens...

READ Matthew 16:21-25 (*recommend class reads it out loud; one person per verse*)

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." 23 But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." 24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and

take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

ASK (answers are in parenthesis)

- In verse 21, what is Jesus telling his disciples? (that bad things are going to happen to him, but in the very end, it'll be okay)
- Let's pretend that you just heard someone you care about tell you about all these bad, awful things that were going to happen to them (the person you care about), but that it is OK to let it happen because in the end something good that's never happened before would happen. Would you still have concern for them?
 - Maybe you'll think they've gone crazy and need some sense talked into them?
 - Maybe you'll at least want them to consider other options...
- In verse 22, what does Peter do? (The same things you would've done for your friends – Peter tells Jesus that there's gotta be a better way. Note: The word *rebuke* is a mostly out-of-date word that means to “sternly warn; to reprimand with words”)
- And why would Peter say/do this? (Because Peter cares about Jesus. And he is scared about what Jesus is talking about. Peter is scared, but he's also expressing care and concern for Jesus. Even invokes God's name.)
- In verse 23, what is Jesus' response to Peter? (Jesus calls Peter “Satan”)
- Whoa! So Peter is expressing *care and concern* for Jesus and Jesus calls him “Satan”! What do you think ... is Peter at all acting like how we think “Satan” or “bad people” would act? (No, not really)
- Also in verse 23, Jesus then says why he calls Peter “Satan.” How does Jesus define the actions of Satan and, in this case, Peter? (Jesus says Peter has his mind on human things, not divine things – which then turns Peter into a stumbling block)
- In verse 24 and 25, Jesus then teaches Peter how he can learn to keep his mind on divine things. Anyone want to give a try at summarizing what Jesus is teaching in verse 24 and 25? (to keep your mind on divine things, keep putting Jesus front and center in your life – follow him and learn to do what he does)

TELL

- One unrelated note to this lesson, but bears pointing out due to the scripture passage: At the start of Jesus' ministry, he is not talking about or even thinking about crucifixion. As the resistance of the Pharisees hardens, though, then this path of letting the consequences of the Pharisees' resistance and the crowd's distraction be experienced by everyone (the consequence of this resistance and distraction is that it kills God's Way of life) becomes the emerging option. God's response to this resistance and distraction will then be shown to those who practice living God's way (the disciples are the only ones who see/experience the resurrection – the crowds and Pharisees do not). Anyways, we know that Jesus isn't talking about this because here we are 2/3rds of the way through Matthew before Jesus says anything about it, and the response by the disciples is one of shock and resistance.
- We discussed at the beginning of class what we think “bad / evil / Satan” is.
- And no one said “Peter.”
- No one said, “When you try to give your good friend advice about avoiding death.”
- Which means Jesus' understanding of what is “bad” is differs from how we think about it.
- So let's look at what Jesus is saying here.
- Jesus is saying that what Peter and Gru and (even Satan) all have in common is that they focus first and foremost on human things, not divine things.
- And when they do put their mind on human things, then they are *out of order*. They've messed up what's most important to them and because of that, how they are living/functioning is getting messed up then, too.
- This is why Jesus then says “Get behind me.” Not “Go away” or “Shut up” but “Get behind me.” Jesus says this because Peter is out of order. Peter has put himself in front of Jesus – which is out of order. Also, think of the game, “Follow the Leader” – it's very difficult to follow the leader when you are in front of the leader.

- So then in verse 24 and 25 Jesus teaches the disciples how to learn to keep their mind on divine things.
 1. The disciples are to follow Jesus (which means they are BEHIND him). This might seem confusing since they are already following Jesus, right? But what Jesus is saying here (somewhat cryptically) is that this choice needs to be made *constantly*. Because in just one moment, Peter went from following Jesus to wanting Jesus to follow him.
 2. This idea, though, of letting someone else/something else determine what we do is *very difficult* to us. To the point that it feels like death. Which is why Jesus uses the language of “deny themselves” and “take up their cross” and “lose their life for my sake.” That’s scary language...because it is a scary thing that Jesus is talking about!
 3. Remember Nicodemus being told to be born again / born from above [see lesson 14]? Jesus was telling Nicodemus that to live like Jesus lived was to learn how to live completely different than how Nicodemus lived by following the rules. That’s what Jesus is talking about, again, in this passage. But instead of the “rules,” Jesus is saying don’t live by paying attention to “human things,”* live by paying attention to “divine things”
 4. Just like it is incomprehensible to the disciples that Jesus will be resurrected and just like being born again was incomprehensible to Nicodemus, so too is it incomprehensible to us that if we let go of our own way of making our own choices (of paying attention to human things) by paying attention to Jesus and God, that we will be able to live God’s better life by doing so. Seems like just the opposite would happen, doesn’t it?

***Note:** Students might wonder what “human things” are. In the scripture story, we see that Jesus is referring to “human things” as a means of personal survival (that IS what Peter wants for Jesus -- for Jesus to survive). But if Jesus listened to Peter, then there would’ve been no crucifixion story and therefore no resurrection story -- because Jesus would’ve run away from the danger to save his own skin. That would’ve messed things up.

- **For the simple version of today’s lesson, think of what Jesus is talking about in this way:**
 - As disciples, their **ONLY** job is to follow Jesus, do what he does and do what he says. In other words, play “follow the leader” all day, every day, with Jesus as the leader.
 - If the disciples don’t play follow the leader, then the order of things gets messed up. Things stop making sense.

TRANSITION to Activity

- To help us think about how getting things out of order leads to things not making much sense, let’s do the following activity.
- There are two situations where the order of events are out of order. They will not make much sense at first because they are out of order.
- As a class, let’s put the events back IN order, so that they’ll make sense again.

DO Ordering Activity (see last page for activity and instructions)

ASK/TELL

- So when we first read the events from top to bottom, did they make any sense at all? (not really)
- And if we tried, for instance, to bake the cookies in the order that the instructions were initially listed, would we have been able to make the cookies? (no, not at all)
- Same thing for Suzie’s Day, right? It would be REALLY tough to live that schedule in the order the events were initially listed.
- But as we thought about the events, we were able to put things in order, right?
- And where we usually started with was what came first – once we knew what came first then everything else made more sense.

- Even though there are many (difficult) things to understand in today's passage, this is basically what Jesus is saying in today's passage to Peter:
 - When the disciples put Jesus first, the rest of things and the events will fall into place.
- Next class, we'll look at what the disciples can do when they put Jesus first and follow him (good things, folks...good things!)

CLOSING PRAYER

ACTIVITY

Making Cookies

Put the following in order by numbering them. #1 will represent the first thing you do, #2 will represent the second thing you do, etc.

- A. ___ Put balls of dough on a cookie sheet.
- B. ___ Mix all of the ingredients together.
- C. ___ Take the cookies off of the cookie sheet.
- D. ___ Go home and get out any other ingredients and any dishes and pans you will need.
- E. ___ Eat and enjoy!
- F. ___ Put cookie sheet with dough into the hot oven.
- G. ___ Let the cookies cool for a while.
- H. ___ Go to the store and buy any ingredients that you need.
- I. ___ Remove the cookies from the oven when they are done.

Order Suzie's Day

Put the following in order by numbering them. #1 will represent the first thing you do, #2 will represent the second thing you do, etc.

- A. ___ Suzie walked away from the dishwasher into the family room.
- B. ___ Suzie read her book from 9:30 to 10:00.
- C. ___ In the family room, she played with her dog, Rusty, until lunchtime.
- D. ___ After playing for one hour, Suzie decided to read inside.
- E. ___ Suzie got up at 7 o'clock.
- F. ___ After she got up, she ate breakfast before getting dressed.
- G. ___ Suzie put the dirty glass from her milk into the dishwasher.
- H. ___ After reading her book, Suzie had a glass of milk.
- I. ___ Suzie put on her clothes so she could go outside to play.
- J. ___ She went out to play at 8:30 that morning.

ACTIVITY Answers

MAKING COOKIES Answers (from http://www.quia.com/pp/3903.html?AP_rand=1372567443)

- A. 4 Put balls of dough on a cookie sheet.
- B. 3 Mix all of the ingredients together.
- C. 7 Take the cookies off of the cookie sheet.
- D. 2 Go home and get out any other ingredients and any dishes and pans you will need.
- E. 9 Eat and enjoy!
- F. 5 Put cookie sheet with dough into the hot oven.
- G. 8 Let the cookies cool for a while.
- H. 1 Go to the store and buy any ingredients that you need.
- I. 6 Remove the cookies from the oven when they are done.

SUZIE'S DAY Answers (from http://www.quia.com/rd/37983.html?AP_rand=1705040963)

- A. 9 Suzie walked away from the dishwasher into the family room.
- B. 6 Suzie read her book from 9:30 to 10:00.
- C. 10 In the family room, she played with her dog, Rusty, until lunchtime.
- D. 5 After playing for one hour, Suzie decided to read inside.
- E. 1 Suzie got up at 7 o'clock.
- F. 2 After she got up, she ate breakfast before getting dressed.
- G. 8 Suzie put the dirty glass from her milk into the dishwasher.
- H. 7 After reading her book, Suzie had a glass of milk.
- I. 3 Suzie put on her clothes so she could go outside to play.
- J. 4 She went out to play at 8:30 that morning.