

Middle School Sunday School Lessons by rfour.org

Year 3: Session 6 – Jesus and his Disciples

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

CONCEPTS that will be covered in the lesson

- Brief review of what it meant in general to be a disciple in 1st century Israel
- Discuss why Peter got “out of order” and told his teacher what to do
- Explore the idea of “sequence / priorities / order” that Jesus is putting forth in the passage.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Some way to play and show movie clip on rfour.org site for this lesson (from *Thor*)
- 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:** *What’s something you think is really important?*

INTRO

- The last two sessions, we’ve been talking about two of the groups that surround Jesus: The crowd and the Pharisees.
- We noted how each group has different characteristics and interact differently with Jesus.
- This session, we will talk about the third group, the disciples
- A disciple in Jesus’ time was like a full-time student who follows one teacher.
- In fact, a better word to use instead of “student” is “apprentice” (when thinking about disciples)
- Apprenticeships are usually for jobs that involve both physical and mental knowledge, like cooking or building (like a carpenter, electrician, plumber, etc)

- As an apprentice, you spend a lot of time with one teacher, watching what they do, listening to what they say, asking questions and practicing under the teacher's direction so that one day you can do the same job in the correct way by yourself.
- This is what it was like to be a disciple
- And, if you were a really good disciple, then you could go on to become your own teacher/rabbi
- We saw this in the story of Elijah being taken up in a chariot of fire -- Elisha, his student, then took Elijah's place after Elijah left.
- All of this to say, the teacher (or "rabbi") was a really important person to the disciple(s) and had a lot of authority.
- Disciples were to listen to the teacher very closely.
- And that's what we're going to talk about today – this idea of how the rabbi was in charge and the students were supposed to follow and listen to the teacher very closely.

TRANSITION to Video Clip

- To get started with today's lesson and to help us think about what would usually happen is a disciple didn't listen to the rabbi, let's watch the following movie clip from Marvel comic book movie, *Thor*
- In it, Odin, who is king, is being questioned and defied by his son, Thor, who is the successor to the throne.
- Let's see what Odin does once Thor continues to defy and argue against him.

WATCH Video Clip

ASK

- Did you catch the original issue that Odin was upset about? (That Thor had dragged their empire into or close to war)
- How does Thor respond to Odin? (that no one will respect them)
- What's the last thing Thor says to Odin that's too much (that Odin is an old and foolish man)
- What is Odin's response, then? (To remove Thor's powers, position, and be banished from the empire)
- Do you agree with Odin's decision? Why?
- Even if you don't agree, does Odin's response make sense to you?

TELL

- In today's story, we're going to see a similar discussion between Jesus and Peter, where Peter questions Jesus' decision-making.
- Jesus' response, though, is somewhat different than Odin's response from the movie clip
- Let's find out what happens and then we'll unpack what Jesus says to Peter and what that means.

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)

- 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]
- 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) -- would you have concern for them?
 - Would you also want to suggest to them that they consider other options?
- In verse 22, what does Peter do? (The same things you would've done for your friends – Peter tells Jesus that has to be a better way. Note: The word *rebuke* is a mostly out-of-date word that means to “sternly warn; to reprimand with words”)
- Do you think that Peter speaking up was the right thing to do? (Certainly seems like Peter cares about, since he's expressing care and concern for Jesus. However, the way Peter does it suggests that Peter isn't trusting Jesus and he is challenging Jesus' decision making)
- In verse 23, then, what is Jesus' response to Peter? (Jesus calls Peter “Satan” and says to get behind him)
- Do you think this was too strong of a response from Jesus? Why?
- Note where does Jesus tells Peter to go – “behind him.” Is this different than “away”? (yes)
- In verse 23, what does Jesus say he means when he calls Peter “Satan?” (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? (in order 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

- Pretend a friend tells you that bad things (torture and death) are going to happen to him/her in the near future once they arrive at a certain destination. What would your response to that person be? What would you say and do? (serious answers will be along the lines of: *stop them from going to the destination*)
- I would do the same thing. And, that's exactly what Peter did. He expressed concern and tried to stop Jesus from getting hurt.
- Jesus, though, did not respond with gratitude. And that reason is because Jesus and Peter are not friends in this story. They are rabbi and disciple. Master and apprentice. Jedi and padawan (that's a star wars reference). And in that type of relationship the student does not tell the teacher what to do.
- So, even though Peter cares, Peter is out of line, here, by trying to tell Jesus what to do. Just like Thor was out of line and thought he could tell the king what to do in our movie clip, Peter has decided that he's in charge instead of Jesus.
- Jesus, as the teacher, then, has to re-establish order. He has to tell the student to stop interfering with what the teacher is doing – otherwise the student won't be able to learn from the teacher.
- Which is why Jesus tells Peter to “Get behind me.”
- That “Get behind me” line is important, because it's Jesus reordering the line. Peter got out of line by thinking he was in charge of the line. And then Jesus is re-establishing the order: That the rabbi is first and the students are behind the rabbi, following the rabbi.
- Now, in the movie clip, we see Odin do the same thing as Jesus did. EXCEPT, the king goes a step farther and actually punishes his son by stripping him of his position and banning him.
- But Jesus does NOT remove Peter. Sure, he called him “Satan” – that had to sting. But he doesn't send him away. He doesn't cast him out. He doesn't fire him. Instead, Jesus tells Peter to get back to learning.

- I think this is a very caring thing by Jesus. He doesn't give up on Peter or punish Peter even though Peter is definitely making a mistake and making a difficult thing even more difficult.
- One more thing I want us to think about regarding this story -- *why* Jesus thinks Peter is out of line.
- The reason that Jesus says that Peter is out of line (and is "Satan") is because Peter has his mind on human things, not divine things.
- And, because Peter's mind is on human things, not divine things, Jesus is saying it causes him to lose his concentration and focus on following Jesus.
- Or put another way, when Peter puts his mind on human things, then his thoughts are *out of order*.
- And once Peter's thoughts are out of order, then his understanding of the situation and his decision-making are going to be messed up.
- For instance, think of the game, "Follow the Leader" -- it's very difficult to play that game correctly if you put the leader behind you and you can't see the leader.
- Again, 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.

***Note:** Students might wonder what "human things" are. In the scripture story, we see the human things as things that are about what we think are important, like survival. But divine things are greater than survival (even though it may be hard to think of something being greater than survival). For instance, if Jesus has 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 life.

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 it made it a lot easier to figure out what would happen next. Everything else started to fall into place.
- 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:
 - Put Jesus first and the rest of the events will fall into place.
- So that's a lesson that Jesus taught the disciples about being students -- to keep their eyes on God.
- In our next class, we'll look at what Jesus taught the disciples about God -- about why they should keep their eyes on God.

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.