

KINGDOM INSPIRED DIVERSITY (LARGE GROUP)

Lesson 3: Keeping in step with the Gospel

Objective: Students will learn that treating people differently because of culture or custom does not fit with the Gospel



GAMES/ACTIVITIES:

What's Different

Materials: Large sheet or tarp

Split the students into two groups. One person from each group will stand face forward with the sheet/tarp in front of them. This means that they cannot see their opponent on the other side of the sheet/tarp. Instruct the student to change something about their appearance that may not be noticed by their opponent. (Moving earrings, changing the tilt of a cap, untying a shoelace, etc) At the count of three, drop the tarp between the two students. First one to identify the change, gets the point for that round. New contestants are invited each round.

Who Are You?

This game format can be used as a name game as well. At the drop of the sheet, they are to call out the name of the person before their name is identified by their opponent.

Bedsheet Ping Pong

Materials: 2 sheets/tarps

Split students into 2 groups. Each group member holds the sheet so that it is spread out. They must work together to pass the ping pong ball to the opposing team. Go back and forth keeping score.

*Also works with volleyball if you have a net/barrier.

MESSAGE:

How would you feel if someone sitting with you during lunch gets up in the middle of the meal and switches seats because some other friends show up? They don't invite you to sit with them. Let me hear some feelings.

What would cause someone to do that? Share some ideas with the person next to you.

I think it is fair to assume that we all would say that was not cool and very disrespectful. Let me ask you this? Would you call your "friend" out for doing that? Let me see by show of hands who would put your supposed friend out on "front street". Interesting. Why would you call him out? (Choose a student to share.)

This means that the rest of us would not bring up the disrespect. Why not? (Choose a student to share an idea.)

This happened in the Bible. Peter, yeah the Peter that was Jesus' disciple. The one who walked on the water and the one who denied Jesus three times. He was visiting a church full of non-Jewish people known as Gentiles. They were eating lunch and probably having a good old time telling stories and laughing. Some Jews from Jerusalem show up and Peter takes a look around, stands up without a word, and just leaves the table. He goes and sits with these Jews and pretends not to know the people he was just eating with. Doesn't this sound familiar? Happens in every school cafeteria across America more than

once per day. The story does not end there. Paul, who used to be Saul until he met Jesus, sees this happen and does not let it go. Listen to what Paul tells Peter.

In Galatians 2 verse 11,

"But when Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I (Paul) opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas (Peter) before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?'"

Let's do some unpacking. Cephas is Peter. He was in Antioch which was where the early church was stationed. It was full of non-Jewish people called Gentiles. You are a Gentile and so am I. Only Jews are not Gentiles. So, like I told you earlier, Peter was grubbing out with these Christians from Antioch that were not Jewish. Jewish people from Jerusalem, the Jewish capital, show up and Peter starts backing away from these people. Notice what Paul wrote in his retelling. Hypocrisy happens because of fear. Who did Peter fear? The Jewish people from Jerusalem. He didn't fear them because they could physically hurt him or they scared him because they were so ugly. Peter feared because of what they would think of him. Can you relate? Sometimes we say or do things because we want to be well thought of by someone else. What does this fear cause? Hypocrisy.

Did you know that a hypocrite was an actor back in the Greek days? You would wear a mask as an actor to pretend to be happy or sad. That is exactly what a hypocrite does. They pretend. They act in a way that does not match what they truly feel or think. (if you can get a hand on a mask, you can demonstrate. Smile but then put on the mask and now no one can tell if you are happy or angry.)

In Peter's case, he pretended to accept these non-Jews by eating with them at the same table. This was a big deal in Jewish culture. In reality, his true colors came shining through when these Jews showed up. Peter was pretending. He was acting. He was wrong.

Paul tells him so in front of everyone! Awkward! Look at Paul's reason for doing so. Peter was not walking in step with the gospel. What does that mean? Let me tell you. The Gospel is the good news that tells us that God in his love has sent his Son Jesus to die on a cross for our pretending and acting. That's great news! We pretend to love God but we don't really. We act like God is important but our lives speak the real truth. God knows this and loves us anyway. Jesus died on the cross for you and for me while we were still pretenders. The Bible calls that pretending, that hypocrisy, sin. Romans 5:8 "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." If we put our trust in Jesus, then our sin is forgiven and we don't pretend as much. Our hypocrisy starts decreasing over time because God, through the Holy Spirit living in us, starts working on our hearts and minds from the inside out. Why doesn't the hypocrisy go away forever? It does and it doesn't.

If you put your faith and trust in Jesus, you are forgiven and free. You don't have to pretend anymore. But because we have had so much practice at it, we slip up and go back to our old way of doing things. That's what happened to Peter. That's what happens to me and you if we are honest. What should we do in that moment? Cry and punch ourselves in the face for messing up again? NO! Of course not.

When a baby is learning to walk, how many times will he/she fall down? A lot. What do they all do after falling? They get back up and try again only to fall again. Our spiritual life is a lot like that. You are going to take a couple of good steps and then you will fall. Get back up. Keep toddling!



Peter realized he messed up. Why? Because he had a brother who reminded him of the truth of the gospel. To walk in step with the gospel means to love others the way that God/Jesus loved them. Sacrificially. Like family. We all mess up. Say the wrong thing. Do the wrong thing. But the beauty of it is that we don't have to do it on our own. We have family that will help us get back up again.

Living as a Christian in God's kingdom means that we do things His way because He is the King; not us. We stop pretending to love people when we really don't. We ask God for the help we need to love people the way He does. Sacrificially, like family. When we do that, with practice over time, we begin to walk in step with the gospel.

How will you begin to walk in step with the gospel? What person do you need to truly love like God does? Who is it that needs to hear a kind and encouraging word in your life? Choose to be like that toddler who will fall down along the way but will get the hang of walking soon enough!

Pray

