

## **Introduction**

The Bible teacher, Derek Prince famously said, 'When Paul went to a city to preach, there were riots. When most Christians go to a city to preach, no-one knows. Sometimes I say to the Lord, I wish there were more riots when I preach..'

Anyone familiar with the ministry of John Wesley in England, will know that the established church refused to let him preach in their churches. Instead, he preached in the fields and in open places. Often there was trouble. You see, the Gospel message (like the Bible) divides people who often react powerfully, one way or another. It may be popular to say 'Jesus loves you' but the associated message that we do wrong and must change, is rarely a popular one in a time where the god of the age is 'do what makes you feel happy.'

So the message of Jesus stands out. Or it should do. As the commentator hints, we need to check ourselves that we are truly living and preaching the Gospel of Jesus as it's found in The Bible.

This session is taken from Mark 1. Mark is a gospel full of the miracles and amazing stories of Jesus. Out of this we can extract many valuable lessons about our lives as Christians, and the message of Jesus that the world around us needs to hear.

### **Game - Deal or No Deal**

Play this game exactly as the Channel 4 series. I will describe how it works for those unfamiliar with it..

Playing this game will depend on how many people you have in your group. To make it work well, use at least 6 people - and up to say 10-12 people. You will need to create as many boxes as you have people, and then number each box numerically on the outside, starting from 1. The box should have a lid, which is liftable in only one direction. On the inside of each (sealed) box, write the name of a 'prize' as described below on the underside of the lid so it will be readable to the audience when the contestant lifts the lid. The numbers should be written clearly on one side of each box.

So if you have 6 people, make up 6 boxes. On the inside of the boxes, you will need to write something that the player can 'win'. Unlike the Channel 4 series, you won't be offering a top prize of £500k. However, you need to have a range of 'prizes' that range from the atrocious to the desirable. Examples are below:

1. A Mars bar
2. A banana skin
3. A one pence piece
4. A £20 note
5. A recording of the pastor's last sermon (or similar)
6. A few bags of Haribo or sweets etc.
7. A signed photo of the youth pastor
8. A £15 music voucher
9. A cup
10. A £1 coin

As you can see, not every item is desirable, but they should be randomly spread across the numbered boxes. So, don't make number one the most desirable prize and number 10 the least desirable! Note that the prizes are not inside the boxes, only the name of the prize.

Then, you need as many contestants as you have boxes. So let's say you have 6 contestants. They come up and choose a numbered box each and then have to sit or stand in a semi circle facing the audience / rest of the group. They should be behind a table, with each of their boxes sitting on the table, with the number clearly facing outwards. Then get a dice and roll it. Whichever number comes up is the number of the person who will 'play' the game. So if Joe chooses box 5 and the dice rolls to 5, it's Joe who plays. The other players remain where they are.

Joe comes to the front with his box. If you can, have a screen or a flip chart with the names of the prizes on. Do not show the numbers that each of the prizes relates to! So on the screen you'd have 6 of the examples above (or use your own). Joe then has to pick a number. Whichever number he picks, he loses the related prize for.

The purpose of this game is effectively for the player to 'gamble' on winning as big a prize as they can. The added element thrown into the mix is that you secretly have some other prizes available. You also know exactly which prize is in which box. Every so often (perhaps after the 2nd and 4th box has been opened), you offer one of these fairly tempting prizes to the contestant, in return for them ending their game. You must plan to have 4 different 'other' prizes. The other prizes should range in desirability. The prize you offer the contestant will be done to make them think about taking the 'other' prize. The other prizes must all be less valuable than the top prizes.

The 'other' prizes (examples):

1. £5.00 (where your maximum prize is £20)
2. Two bars of chocolate
3. One giant bar of chocolate
4. £7 in a mix of coins (where your maximum prize is £20)

So, let's play out an example of the game with Joe...

On a flip chart / screen, have the prizes (1-6) randomly listed:

- A one pence piece
- A Mars bar
- A banana skin
- A box of Maltesers
- A tape recording of the pastor's last sermon
- A £20 note

Joe picks box number 1. The contestant with box 1, opens the box to reveal the word 'mars bar' on the underside of the lid. Sighs, as Joe can no longer win the Mars bar. He then chooses box 6. The contestant with box 6 lifts the lid to reveal the word 'box of Maltesers.' Groans as he can no longer win that. There is only one prize left that he wants to win! Then you, as the games master, offer Joe an alternative prize. If you are able, have someone else ring your mobile and then call off as you 'answer' it. Then pretend to be having a conversation with this imaginary person. End the phone call and then offer Joe one of your 4 'other' prizes.. In this instance, Joe hasn't done very well, so you offer Joe the £5.00. If he takes it, he ends the game. If he doesn't, he risks continuing and losing the top prize, the £20.

If Joe were doing well (and still had 3 of the 'good' prizes left), you'd offer him the £7 'other' prize..

Hope this makes sense!

### **Alternative Simpler Game**

Simply have 5 boxes at the front with 5 contestants. Each box has a prize in. One by one the contestants point to the boxes and then have to take that box and open it. Inside will be a prize, or more likely, write the name of a prize in them. Then that players wins the prize.

### **Read out loud**

Mark 1.14 to Mark 1.28.

### **Radical Jesus**

This is a session on the radical life of Jesus. In the game, 'Deal or No Deal' you have to make bold choices in order to win prizes. With Jesus, we have to make a bold choice to follow him, to win our 'heavenly prize'.

As we look through Mark 1, we'll learn many different and incredible lessons from the life of Jesus. We look to him as our example, the author and finisher of our faith. We look to him as our God, our master and our friend, as the one and only perfect example. Following him will often produce extreme reactions from people around us. But this is the life of Jesus. A radical, unusual and bold life. Fancy a piece of the action?

## **Exercise**

Play any game with a strategy or a visible end in site. One easy example is to play the board game, 'Battleships' and have 2 teams, with each team attempting to blow up 1 or more of the enemy's ships. Have 2 people play each other from each group, up front away from the others, so no cheating takes place!

A more lively and simple game would be where you divide into 2 or more groups. Each group has to design various things to 'win'. So, exercise 1 is to design a paper airplane. The winner is the one whose plane flies the longest distance. Exercise 2 is to design a ball with paper and tape. The winner is the ball that rolls the furthest / in the straightest line. You can have other exercises, such as building the tallest structure, using just 5 sheets of A4 paper. And so on..!

## **The Mission**

Our mission, should we choose to accept it, is to follow Jesus and be witnesses for him. In Mark 1.14, we find our catchphrase, our logo, our strapline: proclaiming the good news of God. Our duty, mission, life's purpose is making Jesus known, spreading the good news - the Gospel. The message is good news, but it comes with a string attached.. (verse 15).

To be part of a world cup winning team, one of the main things a player needs is to put in hours of practice, to plan, develop, make sacrifices and changes, where needed, to make them achieve. The same is true with God. We have the choice to accept God, but this comes at some personal cost. The cost is that we turn our back on sin, on wrong doing. We then have to believe that Jesus is real and invite him into our hearts to take complete control. Just as the football team has to accept the instructions of the manager, so the children of God take instruction from their head coach.

Jesus said, 'the time has come' (verse 14). Be encouraged today that God has your life and times in his hand. Jesus has perfect timing and for some of you, Jesus is about to say, 'your time has come..' Be prepared, expectant and patient.

## **Exercise**

Get people in teams of 2. One person is blindfolded, the other person has to lead the blindfolded person through a series of obstacles (such as over a table, around chairs etc). This focuses on communication, trust and faith!

## **The Calling**

Jesus walked along the Sea of Galilee and saw Simon and Andrew casting a net. Jesus invited them to come and follow him and they obeyed. James and John were called and obeyed in a similar way.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you have been chosen personally by Jesus. Were you ever part of teams at school where there were 2 captains picking a team. This is really hard for some people who know they'll be left until last. Not so with Jesus. Each person he chooses is deliberately and lovingly chosen. More than that, you are equally valuable as anyone else. It's like Jesus points to you and says, 'I want you in my team as a number one'. He then points to the next person and says, 'I want you in my team, also as a number one.' If you're not yet part of God's family, today is the day to make a real choice.. Follow Jesus or live a life without the one person who gives life meaning.

The 4 people who Jesus chose were working hard, going about their everyday business. If you are a Christian and looking to God for guidance, his message to you today is, 'keep working, keep going and being obedient. I will direct you and guide you, be with you in everything.' The Bible slates laziness more than many other negative aspects of life. Don't be lazy, work hard and do your best. In due time, God will point to you (by his Word, through prayer, circumstance or directly) and say, 'now's the time to make a change..'

The brothers were immediately obedient to Jesus, despite the personal cost. They left their nets, their boats. John and James left their Father and the hired men who worked with them. More than that, the 4 disciples followed Jesus. They followed Jesus. That is an active word, a moving word, a dynamic word. Our Christian life is one that is on the move, moving forward with Jesus, following and obeying him. Today, are you walking forward with Jesus. Are you walking where Jesus walks? If you don't, you'll be left behind.

Jesus had a mission, a purpose, a calling - to make the disciples fishers of men. Look around at your youth leaders. Their heart is to see you develop, to succeed and achieve what God has for you. Jesus chose the disciples to train them up. Your youth leaders have a desire to train you, share their lives with you, so that you can be more than you think you can be, and be all that God's made you to be. But you have to play your part too. It's no good joining a football team and then getting on the pitch and refusing to listen to the coach. Think about it.

One time, I was on holiday in Italy as part of a group. Our group had a leader who led us with a sign. It was very embarrassing, but had we not followed the leader in places like Venice, we'd have got lost or left behind. Jesus is walking in front of you, guiding you through his Word and prayer. You need to follow him, walk with him, obey him.

## **Exercise**

Relating to power. One idea is to get some Sumo wrestling suits and have a competition. We also hired in an inflatable boxing ring and gladiator style game where opposing players knock each other off spinning circles with inflatable poles. If you can't do this, you can play football or a team game. Or, as a random thought, play pop-up pirate. Or something similar!

## **The Power**

Being a follower of Jesus means that we live with a Spirit of power, of love and of self-control / self-discipline (see 2 Timothy 1.7). Many Christians and churches have a lot of love (not all). Others have a vision and work towards that in a Godly way. But very few Christians or churches are truly working in the power of God. The thing is that we have an incredible power at work through us (see Ephesians 1.18-20), though not always visibly or in the way that the world recognises. We need to be open to use this power of God in us, humbly and in a Godly way. Let's look at the example of Jesus in Mark 1.

Jesus went to teach at the synagogue. This was incredible in many ways, but especially because the people found that, '(Jesus) taught as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.' What an incredible indictment on the normal teachers of the law. I think many of our churches are like this - powerless, watering down the power of God and his Word, speaking without authority or without meaning.

You may be part of a church where the pastor, youth pastor - do speak with authority. But this is a warning. Fix our eyes on Jesus, listen to him first and foremost. He has the ultimate authority and we must set him above every other person, teacher and pastor. If you're in a church where the pastor is controlling and tells you what to do, GET OUT. Jesus is our model. God's full, unedited and unchanging Word (The Bible) is our handbook. Don't settle for anything less.

But this is a challenge to all of us. Let's speak with the power of God in us, his authority, with his glory in mind. Let's dig deep into God's Word, into prayer, in time with Godly positive Christians. Let's ask God for more and expect more. Then let's step out, continuing to learn and improve, bringing on others. Let's never be as someone without God's power at work in and through us.

However, when we start to demonstrate God's power, often there is a test. For Jesus, an evil spirit in a man started disrupting Jesus speaking in the synagogue (verse 23). Jesus cast the spirit out of the man. (Interestingly, the spirit in the man knew full well who Jesus truly was. I have often found that people in the 'world' recognise things for what they are more than Christians. Be aware!)

Think of things this way (going back to our analogy about footie). You're in the team, you've trained, you know you worked hard. But then comes the match. This match will test you and your team, to see if you truly can succeed and live up to what you say you are. The same is true spiritually. We need to be right with God, following God and obeying him. We need to be prepared.

## **Challenge**

In verses 27-28, we find that the news about Jesus and the Gospel spread over the whole region of Galilee. In these days we're living in, Christians will increasingly stand out. As evil rises, the power of God will need to be made known through us more than ever. The fame of God will spread as this happens. Our question is whether we're ready and how we can get ready.

## **Prayer and Song**

Play out with a challenging song, to get people to think. Then lead people in a prayer relating to the session and to your group. Think of a way in which you can pray with and follow up young people who respond to the session.