

Down Town with Mark: Session 10

Title: On the road into town

Bible base: Mark 11:1–10,15–18

Aim: To help the children understand that Jesus knew he wouldn't always be popular.

As Jesus rides into Jerusalem, Mark portrays him as a pilgrim coming to the temple, suggested by the cry of 'God bless him who comes in the name of the Lord'. He rides a donkey as a conquering king, and branches are thrown before him. He accepts the passing praise of the crowd. He is in control and knows what is before him. Later we see Jesus in the temple clearing it of the money changers and sellers. One moment he is very popular, having people bowing to him, hailing him as a king; the next he is very unpopular.

Introduction

Play the song 'Downtown' as the children arrive, to welcome them whilst you are doing the register or having a drink if the club runs after school.

Game

Choose one of the following games, all of which demonstrate that things are not always what they seem and can change.

Word change (for upper Key Stage 2 children). In groups, start with a word, then by changing one letter at a time, turn it into an opposite word. For younger children or to make this activity shorter, there could be some letters already filled in.

An example: LOVE, DOVE, DAVE, HAVE, HATE

Try the following: change PALM to HARM; change KING to KILL, change JOY to WOE. Think of other pairs which could be contrasted.

Answers (there may be other routes that work equally well):

PALM, pale, pare, hare, HARM; KING, kink, sink, silk, sill, KILL; JOY, Joe, WOE

Alternatively, **Four corners**. Label each corner of the room as 'Pigeon sellers', 'Money changers', 'Palm wavers' and 'Donkeys' using the labels in the 'Labels' resource file for this session. One leader stands in the middle of the room and closes their eyes; the children choose a corner and act out the activity silently. The leader picks an activity at random and then opens their eyes – those in that corner are out. Play continues by using different leaders until everyone is out or a time limit is passed.

Upfront time

Divide the children into two groups. Each group is read a different part of the story from the Bible by a leader.

Group 1: Mark 11:1–10, the entry into Jerusalem,
Group 2: Mark 11:15–18, the clearing of the temple.

Keeping the groups separate, discuss with the children what they have just heard, thinking about how different people who were there must have felt:

- Group 1 from the point of view of someone in the crowd welcoming Jesus,
- Group 2 from the point of view of the temple traders and money changers.

After a few minutes of discussing, remaining in groups, practice acting out the story ready to show the other group.

Bring the groups back together. Group 1 acts out their story and then a leader uses a pretend microphone to interview both people in the crowd and temple traders about what they think about Jesus, as if on a TV programme. Some possible questions:

- What did you think about Jesus?
- Why were you cheering?

Group 2 then acts out their story and again a leader interviews them by asking questions such as:

- Why do you think Jesus was cross?
- Who do you think he is?

Emphasise that it is easy to be popular but harder to stand up for what is right.

To talk about

Go back into the same groups as before and ask the children to talk about situations where it was really hard to do what was right. Did they do it or did they chicken out? Or can they tell everyone in the group about someone they know who chose to do what was right when everyone else wanted them to do the wrong thing? Ask the children what would Jesus have wanted them to have done and how could he help them.

Prayer and craft activity

You will need:

- enough copies for each child of the palm leaf and coin pictures from the 'Coin and leaf' resource file for this session,
- a paper plate for each child,
- pens and felt tips or crayons,
- scissors,
- glue or glue sticks.

Give each child a palm leaf and temple coin to colour in. Cut out and stick one on each side of a paper plate.

Write or draw things to cheer about around the leaf on the plate. Write or draw things to stand up for, even when it is hard, around the temple coin on the plate.

Bring the children back together and ask for a few volunteers to read out what they have put on the palm leaf side of their plate and then altogether shout out 'Thank you Jesus'. Then ask for a few

volunteers to read out what they have put on the temple coin side of their plate. Some children might be too embarrassed to share these with the group. If no one offers then be ready to share some things that you think the children may have put on their plates eg not going along with the crowd, being a friend to someone who is on their own. Then get everyone to stand on their feet and either hold hands or link arms with each other (leaders may need to stand in between girls and boys) to form an allegiance to help support everyone. The leader then prays a prayer asking God to help everyone to do what is right even though it may be difficult at times.

Craft activity

With Key Stage 2 children, make a newspaper page. You will need:

- newspapers,
- large sheets of paper,
- scissors,
- pens or pencils.

Get the children to work in groups to prepare a newspaper page entitled 'What a difference a day makes!' using written articles and illustrations from a recent newspaper. They should choose the articles, arrange and stick them onto a large sheet of paper.

Song

Sing 'So Cool' from the CD *Reach Up!* (available from <http://light.scriptureunion.org.uk/light/reachup.asp>).