

**02.07.10 – Mark 8:27-9:1**

Materials Needed: 1 flower seed (plant during community group), 2 flowerpots with planting soil, water, newspaper, paper towels (to clean up), 1 flowering plant that's the same as the flower seed (plant prior to community group and bring with you)

Opening Activity

- We're going to do some gardening tonight! Explain that before a flower becomes something beautiful, it begins as a little seed and once it's planted in the soil, it needs the nutrients in the soil, water, sunlight and a little care for it to become a beautiful flower.
- Place newspaper on the floor and prepare one of the flowerpots for planting. Ask for a volunteer to dig a small hole in the dirt and have another kid place the seed in the dirt and plant it. Have another volunteer water it.
- Explain how it may not seem like anything is happening for a while – it may not even seem like there's anything in the flowerpot – but as you water it, give it sunlight, and care for it, a new sprout will begin to pop up and eventually become a beautiful flower. (Show the kids the full-grown flower and explain how the seed you all just planted will become a flower like this in time.)
* Consider keeping the newly planted seedling and have different children care for it over time so that you guys can watch it transform.

Discussion

Tonight, we're going to discover how our lives are similar to the little seed that we planted and how Jesus can transform us from a tiny seed into a beautiful flower. Let's dive into tonight's passage to begin!

Read Mark 8:27-32a, 34-37

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said it plainly.

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?"

At this point in Mark, we see that Jesus is beginning to prepare the disciples for what's to come – Jesus' capture, torture, death and resurrection. This is why he asked the disciples who people were saying he was, who they thought he was, and explained what it really meant to follow him.

Question One: Peter declared that Jesus was the Christ in verse 29. What did he mean by this? (*Looking at the phrase, 'The Christ,' in Greek, we can see that it means 'the Anointed One' or the one that God chose to set the Jews and others who believed free. Matthew 16:16, a corresponding account of this same situation, says that Peter proclaimed that Jesus was '... the Christ, Son of the living God.'*) Therefore, when Peter said that Jesus was 'The Christ,' he meant that he alone was God's son, the Messiah, chosen to set the world free from their sin and brokenness.



Question Two: Who do you say that Jesus is today? Allow the kids to answer on their own. Possible answers should include but aren't limited to: *Jesus is my Savior, the one who saved me from my brokenness. My redeemer; he brought me from death to life. The Son of God, the only one who could save me and make me right with God.* Where there answers are true, encourage them by recognizing this. Where there answers are NOT true, lovingly point out what is true and answer any questions they may have.

Note: If some of the kids don't yet believe that Jesus is the Christ, encourage them to continue to ask questions about him. Ask them to consider this statement from the book, *Big Truths for Young Hearts*: "If we look at all the people who have ever lived and will ever live, Jesus alone qualifies, in his person and work, as the only one capable of actually bringing about forgiveness of sin for anyone and everyone in all of the world." Jesus testifies to this in John 14:6 when he says, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. . . ." And Peter then confirms this in Acts 4:12 by saying, "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

In verse 34, Jesus begins to explain to his disciples and to the crowd what they need to do to follow Him. He says, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Question Three: Why did Jesus ask the disciples and others to follow him? Why does he ask us to do the same? *Jesus is God's Son and the ONLY way to be made right with God because of our sin. Believing and following Him is the only way to be saved and freed from our sin and brokenness. (Acts 4:12, John 14:6) As we believe this and begin to follow Him, we have the opportunity to become more and more like Jesus every day because God's own Spirit actually lives inside of us when we believe in Jesus, and this Spirit changes us to be more like God! As a result, other people who don't know Jesus will see the Holy Spirit in us and will want to follow Jesus too!*

As we follow Jesus, he asks us to not only follow Him, but to "deny [ourselves] and take up [our crosses] and follow [him]". This doesn't mean that we have to carry around an actual cross. This means that just as Jesus willingly died on the cross to pay the debt for our sin and give us new life, we too have to surrender, or willingly choose to give our whole life to Him and obey Him regardless of the hardship or suffering that may come.

The cross was a tool used to kill people and it was a sign that you were under the power of something that you used to rebel against, something you couldn't escape from. When we follow Jesus, however, carrying our cross reminds us that we choose to be under the power of God, who we used to rebel against. This makes the cross something beautiful! It doesn't mean that we have to do this to pay for our sin. Only Jesus can pay the penalty for our sin, and when we believe in Him and that God raised Him from the dead to pay for our sin, we're saved! Carrying our cross is something we do once we're already saved to show that we love God!

Wrapping Up

Let's think back to the little seed that we planted earlier tonight: On its own, the seed would die and become nothing. But as we planted it, watered it, gave it the nutrients it needed in the soil and (will) expose it to sunlight, it will become a beautiful flower. (All of which will happen with the seed in time, but which already happened with our flower.) And similarly to the care that we gave the seed, when we choose to recognize that our whole life belongs to Jesus, the Christ (place our life in His care), and allow Him to "bury" our old life with His in the grave, the resurrected Jesus redeems our life and transforms us into a beautiful new creation, like the flower, that will bring Him glory!

End in prayer. Thank Jesus that He alone is the Christ and has the ability to free us from our sin. Ask Him to help us surrender our whole life to Him even though it's not easy.



Ask the kids if today's the day that those who haven't yet believed want to believe and follow Jesus for the first time. If so, celebrate with them and show them how to walk to Jesus, seek forgiveness for their sins and brokenness, and thank Him for the new life that He offers them! Then tell your Coach, so that we can celebrate as a church family!