

Rooted in Paradoxes

Lesson 4: Passive Resistance

Objectives:

Students will

- consider rethinking their responses to various situations
- look at how Jesus encourages us to respond to circumstances in our lives
- explore ways to resist the world without being aggressive or confrontational

Materials Needed

- ☐ White board or poster paper
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ If desired, equipment to play video clips and selected videos
- ☐ Poles with string or rope tied between them, approx. 4 feet from the ground. (Depending on group size, have multiple sets and have a race.)

Minds On

Electric Fence (Thanks to <http://www.funandgames.org/games.html> for this game)

Use two poles and piece of string or rope tied between the poles about 4 feet high from the ground. The object is for the entire team to get over the "electric fence" (the string or rope) without getting "electrocuted" (touching the rope). No going under either! Only one team member can go over at a time, but they can be helped by team-mates. Other team members can help any way they want, but once a person is over the fence, they must stay over the fence and may not come back around to help anyone. So the last person each time must somehow get over the fence without help from the other side. This game requires lots of teamwork and cooperation. Try it with the rope at different heights, perhaps with several fences in a small obstacle course.

(NOTE: There are a lot of variables to be taken into consideration with this game, and you will ultimately have to assess how to best use it with your group in your environment.

- Firstly, there are some **space** issues. This game requires a large room or gym. If that is not available for you, consider playing a “mini” version using toothpicks stuck in marshmallows with a string tied between them. Have the students move jellybeans over the string using chopsticks or some other way of manoeuvring.
- Second, given the **physical nature** of this game, it is important that you consider how your group will respond. If there is a concern that lifting may lead to inappropriate touching, split the teams by gender and have the girls race against the guys. There may also be issues for larger students, which may create some awkwardness. Consider having teams select a specific number of students to go over the rope, while the others help with the lifting. This allows for “spectators.”
- Finally, **safety** needs to be considered: If you are playing the game as described, ensure that you have leaders present and prepared to act as “spotters” to help avoid any accidents.)

After playing the game, say something like: We often find ourselves in situations where we have to deal with a barrier or opposition of some kind. In those moments, we have to decide how we

are going to respond. What are some ways that you could have dealt with this situation if the instructions weren't given to you?

- They could have broken the string/rope
- They could have crawled under
- They could have just walked around
- They could have simply stayed on the side that they were on

The challenge of this situation was learning how to respond within the parameters that we are given. It required creativity and a little extra effort, but it allowed you to accomplish the task in a way that was appropriate and fit within guidelines that were set out for you.

Action

Say something like: Tonight is our final look at some of the Paradoxes that surround our faith. We have looked at what a paradox is (perhaps ask for a reminder of the definition, or an explanation), we have talked about what it looks like to have faith in God, yet still feel like we can ask questions, and we have looked at what it means to be a leader who is a servant, and a servant who is a leader. Tonight we are going to take a bit of a step back and look at a broader picture of how Jesus would have us deal with the situations in which we find ourselves, in a way that is equally paradoxical.

What do you think of when I say the word “resistance?” What does it mean to “resist” something or someone?

Have students turn to the person beside them and share their ideas, and then have them share their thoughts with the larger group. Record these ideas on one half of the white board or poster paper.

Depending on your group, it might also be helpful to show a movie clip that shows an act of military or physical resistance to aid in making this point. An example might be the scene from Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (on the extended version disc 2, it is scene 19 called “The

Battle of Hornburg” starts at 0:59:58 and ends at 1:04:07). If further clarification is needed, offer the following definition: Resistance is typically seen as an act of opposing something that you disagree with or standing against a person or idea. It conjures up images of people barricading themselves in somewhere or physically refusing to be moved. Usually we think of it as being somewhat physical, or even violent. Keep those thoughts in mind...

Now, what do you think of when I say the word “passive?” What does it look like to be “passive?”

Once again, have students share their thoughts with the person beside them, and then return to the group, recording their answers on the other half of the paper or white board.

This is another place where a movie clip depicting stereotypical “passivity” might be helpful. Any clip where a character does not act when he or she should based on the surrounding circumstances. If further clarification is needed, offer the following definition: Typically, being “passive” is seen as not responding or not acting, even when circumstances indicate that you should. It is a lack of participation or involvement. In fact, it is even defined as “receiving, enduring, or submitting [to something] without resistance.”¹

From what we have looked at so far, it seems that being passive is the opposite of resisting...which would make “passive resistance” a paradox, and our topic for tonight!

If resisting is about opposing something that you disagree with, and being passive is about not reacting to the circumstances around you, what do you think passive resistance looks like?

Give students a chance to chat with the person beside them before asking for feedback with the entire group. If further clarification is needed, offer the following definition: Passive resistance is really about responding to situations in a way that doesn’t escalate them or cause you to act in a way that you normally wouldn’t. It’s about responding to people in a way that doesn’t require you to be aggressive or confrontational, while at the same time not allowing people to walk all

¹ <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/passive>

over you. In the context of our faith, it's about seeing situations in the way that Jesus did, and responding like he did.

To help us figure out what passive resistance looks like, let's look at some real examples that Jesus gave to people in his day.

Read, or have a student read, Matthew 5:38-42

Divide students into 3 groups. Assign Group One verse 39, Group Two verse 40, and Group Three verse 41. Have each group create a series of short skits that depict what it might look like to respond to the situation that they were given in a **contemporary** context with stereotypical "resistance", and then by being "passive," and then finally as an act of "passive resistance."

(For some great insights into this passage, and a lot of other things, check out [Jesus for President](#) by Shane Claiborne and Chris Haw)

Consolidate/Debrief

Say something like: When you were trying to get across the string at the start of tonight, you were given certain guidelines that set the boundaries of how you could approach the situation. You had a situation to respond to, and it required you to be creative and to think outside of the box. When Jesus offers these examples of responding to the people and situations around us, he gives us some guidelines which give us a chance to be creative in how we will respond. We want to show God's love and grace to everyone around us, and sometimes that's hard depending on our circumstances, but there is always a way to demonstrate love, even when it's hard.

If appropriate for your group, have the students break off into groups of 3 or 4 and share some specific situations that they are currently in where it may be hard to show love or respond in a way that Jesus wants us to. Have them take turns praying for each other and those situations.