

ELEVATE: Living Life At The Highest Level

Session #1: Revolutionary Attitude

Session Objective: The objective of this session is to get students dreaming about a much better world. What could this world look like if we all lived life at a higher level? Once we get them dreaming, we want to guide them towards looking inside themselves and asking the question: “What do I need to change in my own heart to effect change in the world?” This session focuses on the radical and revolutionary attitude that Jesus called His followers to embrace. This session will focus on Matthew 5:1-12.

Minimum Prep: Read through the entire session outline. Prepare an environment where discussion can occur.

Extended Prep: There are a few audio/visual aids that could be used to add punch to this session.

- Print off several copies of the lyrics to the song “Higher” by Creed. These lyrics are provided for you at the end of this session material. Give each student a copy of the lyrics or print them out onto an overhead slide and project them onto a screen. PowerPoint can also be used. This will be used during the Leader Preamble to intro the theme for the night.
- Rent the movie “The War” starring Elijah Wood. The clip to use begins 1 hour and 2 minutes in and begins with the words: “Dad! Dad!” Let it run for 2.5 minutes. It ends with the words: “It looks like they haven’t been given anything in a long time.” In this clip some bullies are antagonizing a boy named Stu. Stu’s father steps in and breaks things up but then surprises and annoys Stu by giving the boys some cotton candy. Stu is upset that his dad would be nice to the boys who were hassling him, but Stu’s father believes kindness can overcome evil.

Session Outline

Leader Preamble:

Have you ever wished we lived in a better world? I wish it all the time. I wish people weren’t so selfish. I wish that people weren’t so isolated from one another. I wish that sex wasn’t so cheap. I wish that marriages lasted forever. I wish that violence wasn’t always the way people solved their problems. I wish that money wasn’t the only thing people chased after. I wish that people knew their neighbours and I wish that on a street where everyone had less than 5 square metres of grass, not everyone felt they needed to own their own lawn mower. I think most people want the world to be a better place – I think most people want to live life at a higher level.

One of my favourite bands is the group Creed. They have a song entitled “Higher”, which talks about the desire to live in a better world. Let’s take a look at what they said. (Show lyrics. Consider playing the song while students read the lyrics.)

I love the line: “I’d sacrifice all those nights if I could make the Earth and my dreams the same.” That’s awesome! What would you sacrifice to make the world a better place?

Jesus called on His disciples to be world shapers. He warned them it would be costly but He also said that the rewards would be great on this world and in the world to come. Creed points us to the fact that love has to replace hate if this world is ever going to change. Jesus takes that principal and uses it to teach a whole new attitude to His disciples. It is a revolutionary attitude – an attitude that can change everything, because the secret Jesus lets us in on is that this world is never going to change – unless we first change ourselves. I want to show you a short clip from the movie “The War” about one man who thought that attitude was the secret to affecting change. (Show clip)

Stu’s father believed that an attitude based on love and peace was the only hope for reversing the evil in our world. Things like retribution and payback and getting even – those things make us feel good but they only continue the cycle of violence, hate and bitterness that destroys the dream we all have for how life can be lived. Stu’s father, like Jesus, dreamed of something more. Let’s break up into our Small Groups and look at what Jesus had to say about the importance of having a Revolutionary Attitude.

Small Group Questions:

- 1. The funny thing is that we know Jesus’ disciples still thought that He was going to emerge as a political King, and overthrow the Romans by force. As they sat down to hear some Kingdom Strategy from their future King, how surprised do you think they were with what Jesus had to say? What does this tell you about the nature of the Kingdom Jesus is building?**

You will need to guide the students here as this is likely new ground for them conceptually and theologically. They may not know that the disciples had this expectation of Jesus. It may be helpful to read them John 6:14-15. Following this, explain that while the people were looking for an earthly Kingdom, Jesus wanted something more. He wanted the Treasure of Heaven to take root in every human heart. Read them Luke 17:20-21.

- 2. Take a look at Matthew 5:3 and Matthew 5:6. What does it mean to be ‘poor of spirit’ and to ‘hunger and thirst for righteousness’?**

These phrases imply that Jesus is calling on us to become spiritually dependent. If you are poor of spirit it means you are aware of the fact that you are spiritually bankrupt – you have nothing to bring to your own salvation. Spiritually poor people are blessed because they rely on God's grace. People who look to God to supply them with spiritual sustenance are blessed because God rewards spiritual dependence with plentiful supply. The point is that the first attitude we need to adopt is the attitude of trust and dependence on God.

- 3. Look at Matthew 5:5. What does it mean to be meek? Does it mean the same thing as timid? Should Christians be weak-kneed losers that get sand kicked in their face all the time?**

You can go a long way with this one! I would start my journey with 1 Samuel 4:5-9. This is the story of when the Philistines first invaded Palestine. The Philistines are ancient Greeks like those from the movie Troy. They were an advanced military culture with modern weapons and the Israelites were a rag-tag mob with sharpened farming tools. But the Philistine's had heard of Yahweh and they were afraid! Yahweh is no wimp and His reputation sent ripples of fear throughout the world. Then I would read them 1 Samuel 7:7-11. In this scene the Philistines draw up to fight Israel but Yahweh shows up and blasts darkened hole after darkened hole in the disciplined ranks of the enemy army. The Philistines flee the scene and do not have the courage to attack Israel for another generation! Yahweh rocks! Now wait a minute; Jesus IS God and now God is sitting calmly on a rock telling us to be meek?! Isn't he the same guy who just sent lightening bolts into the Philistine battle ranks? Yahweh is asking us to be meek like a thoroughbred racing horse controlled by his harness. That's what the word meek actually means: controlled power. We know our power but we choose to limit it for the sake of love and for the growth of the Kingdom.

Sometimes we are wronged and we DESERVE justice; Jesus says: Turn the other cheek for the sake of love. That's meek! That's revolutionary attitude!

- 4. In the clip we watched from "The War", Stu's dad was pretty merciful. How do you think that may have impacted those bullies? He was also pretty gracious. Do you know the difference between grace and mercy? How did Stu's dad show some of each?**

Grace is giving people what they don't deserve: i.e. cotton candy. Mercy is not giving people what they DO deserve: i.e. a taste of my belt.

- 5. What does it mean to be pure in heart? What is the connection between 'seeing God' and building the Kingdom?**

Wow! You could talk all night about this one! Where to start?! You could use the story of David, who was a man after God's own heart. David's intimate knowledge of God empowered him to become a great man of God. You could use the Acts 13:22-23, 36-37 version of the story for quick, focused punch. You could also use 2 Corinthians 3:18

to unwrap this. The idea there is that seeing Jesus effects transformation, one degree at a time.

- 6. The ideas of Jesus found in Matthew 5:9-11 have inspired men and women all over the world to use peace and a pacifist approach in the fight against injustice. Martin Luther King Jr. did it on the Salem Bridge back in the 60's. In today's war-torn world, how could we apply this approach in a place like Israel where suicide bombers and Apache helicopter reprisals kill dozens every week?**

Let students each share their thoughts. If you want to guide them you could tell them Tony Campolo's idea. Tony wants to recruit a bunch of North American Christians to form a team of radical peacemakers. His idea is that he would station these North American Christians at all the locations where suicide bombings take place. He would also house them in the parts of the Gaza strip where all the bomb factories are. Then every time a Palestinian strapped a bomb on his chest and blew up himself and a dozen Israelis he would also kill Christians from Idaho and New York. If the Israelis fired missiles into the Gaza strip in retaliation, they would kill Christians from the U.S.A. (their only Ally). Tony figures that the outrage caused by the loss of Christian North American lives would effectively end the bloodshed. Of course it would cost you your life. What do you think? Want to sign up?

- 7. Maybe you can't fly to Israel and sit in a bus shelter, and maybe you can't kneel on the Salem Bridge with Martin Luther King Jr., but your attitude can make a difference. What could you do this week to affect change in the world around you?**

Remember to focus on attitude issues. "Clean my room" is not a correct answer. "Be nice to my brother" barely qualifies. You are looking for answers like: "Be nice to that girl that always makes fun of me". "Write my dad a card even though I think he's a jerk for leaving my mom and me". Those would be better.

Leader Note: Contact Rob McAlpine at compass@baptist.ca or Paul Carter – paul@lpsc.ca with any thoughts or questions suggestions.

Comments and Feedback:

Leader Note: This is your place each week to record significant sharing or growth in the lives of your students for subsequent follow up. You can also use this space to provide feedback on the material. All suggestions are welcome.

Please see the following handout. You have permission to reproduce these handouts for your group.

Appendix A For Session 1

"Higher"

When dreaming I'm guided to another world
Time and time again
At sunrise I fight to stay asleep
'Cause I don't want to leave the comfort of this place
'Cause there's a hunger, a longing to escape
From the life I live when I'm awake
So let's go there; let's make our escape
Come on, let's go there; let's ask can we stay?

Chorus:
Can You take me higher?
To a place where blind men see
Can You take me higher?
To a place with golden streets

Although I would like our world to change
It helps me to appreciate
Those nights and those dreams
But, my friend, I'd sacrifice all those nights
If I could make the Earth and my dreams the same
The only difference is: to let love replace all our hate
So let's go there; let's make our escape
Come on, let's go there; let's ask can we stay?

(Chorus)

So let's go there, let's go there,
Come on, let's go there
let's ask can we stay?

Up high I feel like I'm alive for the very first time
Set up high I'm strong enough to take these dreams
And make them mine

[www.azlyrics.com]