



## Blind Spots: The Crowd's Reaction

### OPENING PRAYER

Opening Prayer:

Dear God, we give you thanks for this time that we have together today. Open our hearts so that we may grow in your love. Open our ears so that we may hear from you and each other. Open our hands so that we may let go of what we need to let go, and receive what we need to receive. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

**Read Mark 10:46-48.**

“They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’”

In the Gospel of Mark, the crowds around Jesus grew with each new miracle and followed Jesus from town to town. People are also attracted to his teaching. Rabbis, or teachers, walked and taught while those in the crowd listened hung on every word of the teacher. Bartimaeus' screams were disruptive and were not considered appropriate given the time and place. They demanded for him to stop shouting. Bartimaeus does not stop and is not deterred by the crowd because he is holding on to his conviction that Jesus can heal him.

Imagine being in worship, listening to the preaching pastor, or in Sunday school listening to the teacher, when someone starts yelling, "have mercy on me!" Even though people around try to hush or quiet the individual, they only get louder. We have a choice in that moment. We can either focus on our own needs or see the needs of the person crying out in desperation for mercy. If we fail to see their pain and only think of our own needs, could it be that we are suffering from a form of spiritual blindness?

These crowds became a part of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem where they would turn on Jesus - which would ultimately lead to Jesus' journey to the cross. In other words, later in the Gospel of Mark, we will observe the fickle nature of the crowd. They never really saw Jesus for who he was, but instead saw what he could do for them. They were spiritually blind.

# GROUP REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Share where you've seen God at work in your life this week.

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How often are we so caught up in our own distractions and needs that we fail to see/meet the needs of those around us who have needs, that may even be greater than our needs?

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Share a time in your life when "the crowd" hushed you, but you did not give up? Why didn't you quit? Who or what gave you that resilience?

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How do we get in the way of people coming to Jesus? What could the crowd have done differently in the text?

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What are your prayer concerns and joys?

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# PRAISE AND PRAYER REQUESTS

Please go around the group and have each person share a praise for this week and a prayer request/concern.

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## CLOSING PRAYER

Have a volunteer lead closing prayer: asking for prayer concerns and lifting up the needs of the group.

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# WC ENCOUNTER GROUPS CURRICULUM

## WEEK TWO: THE CROWD'S REACTION

### FAMILY ENCOUNTER

## WEEK TWO

Supplies:

- Bible
- Sacred Candle & Matches/Lighter
- A cork from a bottle
- A bowl of water

## WELCOMING GOD:

Gather together, and welcome God into this time and space through the lighting of a candle. Take this moment to pause briefly and sit quietly in this light for a few moments, allowing time for everyone to relax their body, mind, and spirit for this time. In these moments, the invitation is to become aware of God's presence with and amongst you as a family.

## SHARING WITH GOD AND ONE ANOTHER:

Say: "If anything is on our minds that makes it difficult for us to focus, let's share it now and then let it go."

- Whoever leads this portion might share what is on his or her mind to model this. Give time for each person to respond. When everyone has responded that would like to, invite everyone to place their hands out and lift them up as we give these distractions to God.

OR you can invite the family to pray together as one person leads, saying the following:

"Dear Loving God, The One who knows our hearts, celebrates our victories, grieves with us during our losses, and gives us the strength to overcome our challenges. Please help us to let go of the distractions we name now, so that we can openly share with our family and may encounter you in a special way today. Our distractions are... (let there be silence here, so everyone has an opportunity to name aloud what is distracting them). In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen."

## ENCOUNTERING GOD:

Read aloud: Mark 10:46-48.

- Take turns reading the Scripture or have a different family member read the Scripture each week.

"They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'"

## ENCOUNTERING EACH OTHER:

Say: “When Bartimaeus cried out to Jesus, the people around him sternly ordered him to be quiet. Bartimaeus did not listen to them, though. He just cried out louder. He refused to give up and let others bring him down.”

Activity: If you have yet to do so, fill a deep bowl  $\frac{3}{4}$  full of water. Have one family member put the cork in the bowl. Take turns pushing the cork to the bottom of the bowl and notice what happens.

Say: “The cork won’t sink. Corks are funny that way. They are made of stuff that won’t sink—and so was Bartimaeus. No matter how sternly the people around him warned him to be quiet, he got louder and kept telling Jesus what he wanted.”

### Discussion Questions

- Can you think of a time when it felt like someone wanted you to sink? How did it feel?
- Can you think of a time you wanted to quit something but didn’t? If so, take turns sharing those experiences with each other, and answer the question: what did it feel like to keep going?
- What helps you to do hard things and not give up?

Say: It is striking that the people around Bartimaeus tried to tell him to be quiet and expected him to sink. It’s more striking that he got louder when it would have been easier to be quiet. As we go through this week, let’s find ways to encourage those around us, so they know they don’t have to quit.

\*When everyone has finished sharing, repeat the prayer of Bartimaeus: “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

## ENCOUNTERING GOD TOGETHER:

Say: “May we pray together as a family...

Let us share our prayers for the world: for our country and leaders, for other countries and their leaders...

Let us share our prayers for the church, ministers, and spiritual leaders...

Let us share our prayers for our teachers, first responders, friends, and others in the community...

Let us share our prayers for our family and our own specific needs...”

If you would like to record the people for whom you pray, use the next few lines to do so:

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\*You can also record these requests in a family prayer journal if you are using one.

# ENCOUNTERING TRANSFORMATION TOGETHER:

Pray aloud together:

God, we welcomed you here and read Your Word,  
we prayed and we spent time with you,  
we rested in your love for us,  
and we did this all together.

Now, we promise to love one another and others as you love us.  
In the name of Christ. Amen.

# BLESSING ONE ANOTHER FOR OUR ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WORLD:

Invite family members to bless one another using any of the examples below or their own blessings.

Examples:

- "I love you. God loves you. I pray God blesses you."
- "God loves you exactly like you are—and so do I."
- "I love the gifts God has given you and how you bless the world with them."

# DAILY REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Please answer these during your personal devotional time at the end of the day or do it as a couple or family.

Where have you seen God today? For the children, we say, "what made you happy today?"

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What broke your heart or made you sad today?

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What good thing did you do for someone else today?

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What are you thankful for today?

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