



## **SINK OR SWIM: Week 1**

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## **SINK OR SWIM**

**Week 1:** Can't wait for my summer!

**Bible:** Mark 8:31-38

**Bottom Line:** How do you respond to God's plans?

Before summer even starts, students have their own idea of how they want their summer to be.

In reality, no summer is just sleeping in, swimming all day, eating ice-cream cones, and having bonfires with friends.

Summer usually turns into studying for next year's AP classes, getting a job, or watching your younger siblings.

This week, we look at the time when Jesus predicts His death.

The response He gets from Peter is probably close to what students think when their summer turns into nothing like they imagined.

We will look at how Jesus responds to Peter and position students to look at things in a very different light.

In a way, this will allow them to either "sink or swim" over summer.

## **OPENING GAME: CHOOSE OR LOOSE**

### **SUPPLIES**

- Large table
- Large Red Solo Cups
- Lots of smaller Solo Cups: a different color, poke holes in the bottom of most of them
- A hose to keep the cups filled

### **GAME SET-UP**

Cover the table with all the smaller cups.

Begin filling the cups with the hose and make sure they are always filled during the game.

*(Some will drain because of the holes. Keep them filled as much as possible.)*

Have your students divide into pairs and have them form a circle around the table.

Make sure the table is in the middle of the students and then have them back up at least 15-20 feet.

### **HOW TO PLAY THE GAME**

Give each pair one large solo cup.

The teams then choose one person to lay down on the ground and hold the solo cup on their stomach.

Their team mate stands next to them with their back to the table

On “Go,” they will turn and run to the table, grab one cup, place it on their heads and run back to their team mate to attempt to fill the large cup without taking the small cup off their head.

Return to the table, place the cup down and grab another one, return to their team mate.

Once the large cup is filled (confirmed by a leader), they empty their cup, switch places, and continue.

First team to successfully fill their cups twice – wins!

## TEACH

Congratulations to the winning team!

That was fun to watch, especially when you found out most of the cups on the table had holes in them.

The fact you didn't see that coming was hilarious.

I am betting the person who decided to be the runner thought, "At least I won't be the one getting wet!"

Let me ask you all a question: How is this game similar to your summer?

I mean besides getting soaked with water, because we all love to go swimming in the summer.

Or besides having fun with friends, because we all love to hang out with friends over the summer.

Think back to our game, I bet most of you thought it would be easy to grab a cup and run to your partner to fill their cup.

But, then you had to put it on your head, and you had to try and aim it to fill up the other cup.

And then the cups on the table had holes in them and were almost empty by the time you got to your partner.

Nothing really worked out the way you thought it was going to.

We're starting a **BRAND-NEW** series called, "Sink or Swim."

In this first week, we will explore how to have an awesome summer, without compromising your relationship with God.

Just like in the beginning of summer, you have an idea of what your summer is going to be like, but it never really turns out that way.

*Tell a personal story about a fun time you had during a summer break.*

- *Try to think back to when you were in middle or high school*
- *Something that is funny and relatable*
- *Something that you had no idea was going to happen that summer*

Summer has to be one of the best times we have each year.

Or at least that's the expectation we have.

But, I have a love and hate attitude with summer because I set up in my mind all these things that I want to happen over the summer, and let's be honest, most of them never happen.

Who in here can relate to this?

I bet when the end of the school year comes, you start thinking about all the fun and cool things you are going to do over the summer.

In fact, let's hear what you all have planned for your summer! (*Take responses*)

Wow, all of those sound great and fun, but I am betting that over half of those things never happen.

As I think about it—things like sleeping in all summer, hanging out at the pool doing nothing all week long, and hanging out with friends every day—those things don't really happen as much as we want them to.

In fact, I bet things like studying for next year's AP classes start right away.

Or maybe your mom and dad decide it's time for you to get a job over the summer.

Or maybe you are told your job this summer is taking care of younger siblings without any pay.

In fact, the last thing you ever thought would happen this summer was you sitting inside your house watching the Disney cartoons with your younger brother or sister, or getting up early to go to work all day at some landscape company mowing grass, or some department store ringing up customers.

There is nothing wrong with any of that, it just wasn't what you had expected or thought your summer was going to look like.

Your thoughts of fun in the sun with friends everyday have been totally changed to getting up early, going to work, studying for school, and then maybe, just maybe, hanging with a friend in the evening.

Summer time is just the beginning of seeing things go in a completely different direction than what you hoped for.

Sometimes, the changes seem good.

Sometimes, they seem bad.

But no matter what, they were definitely not what you had planned out.

When things don't go our way, it can be stressful and confusing.

The way we handle the unexpected will either make us sink or swim.

Let's look at what God has to say about times like this.

We are going to look at some scripture in the book of Mark, but it talks about Peter specifically.

The Apostle Peter was probably the most outspoken of the twelve apostles in Jesus' ministry on earth.

He certainly became one of the boldest witnesses for the faith.

Peter was always putting his foot in his mouth, but one thing you could say about Peter was that when Jesus told them (Peter and Andrew) to "Follow Me," they simply walked away and left everything they had without a second thought.

**Open your Bibles to Mark 8:31-38.**

### **Jesus Predicts His Death**

*Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. As he talked about this openly with his disciples,*

*Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things.*

*Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."*

*Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? Is anything worth more than your soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."*

What we see here is Peter's idea of what he felt things needed to be like.

Peter was a devote follower of Jesus, but when Jesus told him he was going to die, Peter kind of freaked out.

In fact, he freaked out so much he pulled Jesus aside and yelled at Him.

Let's read that verse one more time:

*"Peter took him aside and began to reprimand him for saying such things."*

Now, I don't know about you, but I get upset when things don't go my way.

I can get angry when things don't go my way and turn into the exact opposite of what I want.

Who in here has felt that way before?

Look at what Peter does—and we all do that.

We get upset and ask God why He would let things happen that we don't want to happen.

We believe we have the right to question what God does or what His plans for us are, especially when we don't agree with them.

Now let's read what Jesus's response to Peter is:

*Jesus turned around and looked at his disciples, then reprimanded Peter. "Get away from me, Satan!" he said. "You are seeing things merely from a human point of view, not from God's."*

Jesus doesn't just give a small little reminder of who he is and who Peter is not.

Jesus spins around and brings down the hammer on Peter.

Remember, Peter was a guy who was very outspoken and probably put his foot in his mouth more times than not.

This has to go down as on one of the biggest of those times.

First, Jesus actually tells Peter he is Satan.

He wants to get Peter's attention, along with all the disciples'.

Finally, Jesus makes sure everyone is going to hear what He is about to say:

*"If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way,*

There is very little to read into what Jesus is saying here.

If you are a follower, you have to give up your way of living.

You have to live how God wants and in His plans.

So as easy as this is to read and understand, the question is how do we do this?

How do you react to times in your lives when things don't go the way they are planned?

**I want lay out 2 things you can do to help you when things don't go as you expected them to.**

**1. God doesn't want you to be upset when things don't go your way.**

God has a bigger plan for us because He knows what is and is to come.

So while we live in the small moments of our lives, God is seeing and doing things that affect our entire lives.

There is a bigger picture we don't see yet, and possibly may not see for a long time to come.

**Read Jeremiah 29:11.**

*For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.*

This verse is probably one of the most known verses next to John 3:16.

The reason being because we all struggle with wanting to do things, or have plans for things we want to happen.

And most of the time, those plans do go the way we envisioned either for the good or the bad.

These are the times we start to question God and His plans.



This verse simply tells us His plans are for good and not bad, and that we may not know it in the moment, but they will affect our future for good.

The problem comes when we allow our emotions of anger, sadness, or pride to blind us to God's plans.

**2. God understands you will get upset when things don't go your way. That doesn't make you a bad person.**

**Read Ephesians 2:10.**

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

WOW, think about this: God designed you to be you.

He knows who you are and knows how you are going to react to certain situations and times in your life.

But you are also His masterpiece and masterpieces are perfect.

So, He knows you may get upset and that doesn't bother Him.

He just wants you to remember He made you and He knows best.

When we do that, we will do great things for Jesus.

He doesn't want you to get caught up in Satan's lies about doing what you want.

What you think is best will keep you from seeing what God has planned for you.

We live in a world that is constantly telling us to live the way we want to live.

Summer time is no different.

We want to have a great summer, and our idea of what a great summer may be can and will be different from what God has planned.

It's okay to make plans for your summer.

It's even okay to expect to have a great summer.

But, when things don't go the way you planned, how you respond is key.

Remember, God has a plan and He doesn't always keep us in the loop on what those plans are.

When your plans change, and they will, remember God knows what He is doing for you.

You will be upset and that's okay, but don't dwell on sadness, anger, pride or control.

Instead, lean on God's greatness and His love and the truth that He will never do anything to hurt you.

Watch for those times and lean into them, because when you do, it can be the difference between sinking and swimming.

To close out, ask yourself a simple question with big answers.

How do you respond to God's plans?

*Close in prayer.*

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What plans do you have for your summer?
2. Talk about a time when your summer plans changed?
3. How did that make you feel?
4. How does it make you feel that God has a plan for you?
5. How do you feel not knowing what His plans are?
6. What do you think about when Jesus says:  
  
    “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow me.”
7. How do you respond to God's plans?
8. What do you have to do in your life now to better follow God's plans?
9. Where can you turn to for help in those times?
10. Now, after walking through all of this: what plans do you have for summer?