

LESSON FIVE: FACING THE MUSIC

Times have changed. People, even children are forgetting how to play. Some educators believe that play takes valuable time away from more important activities and allows children to hide in a fantasy world instead of facing the realities of life. As a result, playgrounds are empty. When children do get a chance to play, it is usually structured activity with adult supervision. Spontaneous play is disappearing. As spontaneous play disappears, the creativity of children and adults fades away. People need to be entertained constantly, or they don't know what to do. Forgetting how to play is a challenge that must be faced by current and future generations. It's time to face the music.

PRAY: Father in heaven, one of the gifts You have given us is the ability to find joy in our lives. Guide and direct us to seek Your face always. Teach us to enjoy life to the fullest, because it is a gift from You. In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCTION: Sometimes, no matter how ready we feel for the battle, our worst opponent turns out to be ourselves. Stanley Pinto was a professional wrestler who successfully faced a number of tough opponents, but during a match in Providence, Rhode Island, he lost to his most formidable opponent.

The bell rang. The opening minutes began ticking off, and Pinto found himself slightly entangled in the ropes. Eager to free himself, he began struggling wildly. Before he could stop himself, he had pinned his own shoulders to the mat. His shoulders stayed pinned despite his best efforts to free himself. While his opponent, who had not laid a hand on him, watched, the referee began the countdown. Pinto was counted out.

—Ross and Kathryn Petras, *The 176 Stupidest Things Ever Done* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 190.

BIBLE BASE: Ask a volunteer to read Luke 7:24-35. Ask the other participants to follow along in their own Bibles.

DISCUSS: (The following questions are for discussion. The answers are to help the leader guide the discussion. Participants may fill in the answers in the space provided.)

1. What did Jesus mean by a reed shaken by the wind?

He was referring to people who are easily swayed by popular opinion. When popular opinion changes, such people change their opinions to suit what other people think.

2. Why did Jesus refer to people who are splendidly clothed, living in luxury?

Jesus was showing the contrast between people who lived in luxury and people who were like John the Baptist who was in a dungeon. People who live in luxury may often be the ones who are swayed by popular opinion and are rewarded for changing their minds.

3. Jesus said that John the Baptist was more than a prophet. What did He mean by that?

John was the only prophet whose work was prophesied by other prophets. He even quotes Malachi 3:1 to demonstrate His point.

4. Jesus said that the one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than John. Why?

Jesus speaks of John as one whose work is already completed. Those least in the Kingdom of God are greater than John, because John did not see the miracles of Jesus. Remember, Jesus is speaking to an audience that prized neither John nor Jesus.

5. Why were the people, even the tax gatherers, baptized by John but not the Pharisees and the lawyers?

The people who were baptized by John had repented. The Pharisees and the lawyers had not repented. In Matthew 3:7-12, John calls them a brood of vipers, and chastises them for trusting in their own righteousness for their salvation. John omitted nothing in his proclamation to them, but they rejected the message. Ultimately they rejected Jesus as well.

6. Why did Jesus characterize the generation of unbelievers to children at play?

The children at play in the market place changed the games they played according to their moods. One minute they pretended they were part of a wedding (played the flute), and the next minute they pretended they were part of a funeral (sang a dirge). They complained when the others didn't go along with their game. The Pharisees and lawyers complained that neither Jesus nor John the Baptist lived up to their standards.

7. Jesus noted that John was called demonic, and He Himself was called a glutton and a drunkard. What did He mean by that?

Neither John nor Jesus accommodated the fickle moods of their critics. When they went against the stereotypes foisted upon them, their critics turned against them.

8. What did Jesus mean when He said that wisdom is vindicated by her children?

Jesus and John were the children of wisdom, because they were the proponents of divine wisdom. In the forensic sense, they are innocent of all blame, because both were sent from God.

CHALLENGE: Ask participants to discuss popular opinions that they are tempted to follow. Then, develop strategies that will be effective ways to counteract popular opinions.

CLOSING THOUGHTS: A generation which fails to transmit the light from one age to the next does not pass on anything. It transmits darkness.

Almost thirty years ago, when Nikita Khrushchev visited America, he gave a press conference at the Washington Press Club. The first question from the floor—handled through an interpreter—was: “Today you talked about the hideous rule of your predecessor, Stalin. You were one of his closest aides and colleagues during those years. What were you doing all that time?” Khrushchev’s face got red. “Who asked that?” he roared. All five hundred faces turned down. “Who asked that?” he insisted. “Nothing. That’s what I was doing.” he said.

—as told by Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1989), 195.

CLOSING PRAYER: Lord Jesus, send us Your Holy Spirit so that we will be able to recognize Your face of love and forgiveness. Drive us to Your Word so that we will use it as our guide to govern all that we do and say. Help us to be models of human behavior who emulate You in thought, word, and deed. Hear us for Your own sake, O Lord. Amen.