



CRSWLK THE WALK

Dear Youth Leader,

This is our first series of 2025, and we are working in-step with our teaching team as we dive into our series on Belonging. Belonging is a key value at Crosswalk, and is especially important in youth ministry. We must be diligent in our intention to break up cliques, increase interaction, and show our youth group that the church is better when we include and love the other. Please share your stories and struggles with open hearts and encourage questions. Try to put yourself in their shoes (or ask them about it), because the work of creating a space of belonging begins with everyone's voice and story being welcome in our community.

I am praying for you as you prep your time with your youth group, and can't wait to hear how it went. Please reach out if you have any questions, ideas, or stories! I'm here to support you!

Mark Ricalde

Youth Pastor, Crosswalk Redlands

SERIES OUTLINE

Week 1 | Mark 5:24-34

the woman who touched Jesus' robe

Week 2 | Mark 2:1-12

the paralyzed man from the roof

Week 3 | John 5:1-15

the lame man at the pool of Bethesda

Week 4 | Mark 5:1-20

the demon possessed man is free

Week 5 | Matthew 8:5-13

the Roman officer's faith heals

Week 6 | Luke 22:49-62, John 18:10-15

Peter cuts an ear and denies Jesus

SUGGESTED FORMAT

Belonging | 25 - 30 min

Breakfast / Welcome

Sharing Activity

Experience | 25 - 30 min

Worship

Message / Discussion

Momentum | 5 - 10 min

Challenge / Application

Announcements / Visioning

“Go in peace. Your suffering is over.”

PREPARATION

Read Mark 5:24-34

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

Listen to the Series

listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where you felt a desperate need for healing

Activity Idea

- Make a slideshow or print out a bunch of pictures of grouped items with one that does not belong. (ex, 3 deciduous trees and 1 coniferous). Try to make each level harder and harder as you play the game and have students guess which picture does not belong.

Icebreaker Questions

- Is it just as easy to place when people don't belong in a group?

Message Main Points

- note: it might be good to talk about the woman and her condition right off the bat if your group is immature, then you can get that out of the way (the issue of blood, period discussion).
- Today's story is a famous story, and while from the outside it seems like a simple healing, for the woman, it is a healing from a situation of exile. She is spiritually unclean (can't worship), can't be with others (relationally alone), in physical pain, and living in a constant emotional low.
- Jesus heals her from all four aspects. Why does he make a big deal to make her come forward? I think it is because Jesus knows it takes an active (not passive) approach to really making someone belong. He invites her to come forward, hears her whole story, and then calls her "Daughter."

Discussion Questions

- Do you see the woman as desperate or faithful? Talk about it.
- Do you see the woman as courageous or sneaky? Explain why.
- What are the actions we can take in our lives that are the equivalent of touching Jesus' robe?

“My child, your sins are forgiven.”

PREPARATION

Read Mark 2:1-12

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

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listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study* podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where you your friends were the ones who helped in your salvation story

SHARING ACTIVITY

Activity Idea

- Set up a relay in the room where teams have to carry each other across the room. Make it fun. Make it safe.

Icebreaker Questions

- How easy is it to trust others carrying you and racing you across the room?
- Would you rather face challenges alone, or with help?

Message Main Points

- Today's story of belonging is disruptive. A whole teaching time for Jesus is stopped, a roof is destroyed, all because some friends want their friend to be healed.
- Jesus wants to heal this man, but he also wants him to know that his sins are forgiven. Jesus wants the man to know he is seen and welcomed based on the exterior and the interior.
- When we try to build a community of belonging, it needs to include listening to the things that might be bothering us under the skin. Little differences, opinions, arguments are all part of high school life, and church is not a place where we hide them. It is a place where we face it head on, and say let's reconcile, forgive, and welcome each other in.

Discussion Questions

- The ones who should get the credit for this healing are the friends (and Jesus of course). How can we be active friends who bring people on the outside of the community to the inside of community?
- Have you ever felt like you did not belong but could not do anything about it? Talk about that with the person beside you. Commit to building your empathy for others who might feel alone in your youth group.

“Would you like to get well?”

PREPARATION

Read John 5:1-15

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

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Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where you gave up on life. What did you do?

Activity Idea

- Find a challenge (minute to win it?) that is basically impossible. Get the supplies and have everyone try it (or a few at the front for people to watch). Notice and debrief the waning hopefulness at finishing the challenge.

Icebreaker Questions

- What's the longest you have ever had to wait for something? Have the kids share in groups.

Message Main Points

- Today's story is about a man who has given up on being healed. He is part of the broken and exiled community that sits at the pool of Bethesda, but don't expect change. HE WAS LAME FOR 38 YEARS!
- It is crazy yet expected that the Jewish leaders get mad at Jesus. How do sometimes become the barrier to others experiencing healing and belonging?
- Jesus tells the man to stop sinning. At some point, our belonging grows into holding each other to a better way of living. We raise the stakes so our communities can be safer, we can live more faithfully, and so the Holy Spirit can use our excellent efforts.

Discussion Questions

- Do you know someone who has given up on improving their situation? Maybe they think they will never have friends, they will never get good grades, they will never make a sports team. What can you do to notice and welcome them like Jesus did?
- Maybe that person is someone who is always around but always on the edge of the group. Don't point them out now, but realize that Jesus probably wants you to bring hope by being a source of belonging in their life.
- How do we welcome others without making it feel awkward or forced?

“What is your name?”

PREPARATION

Read Mark 5:1-20

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

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Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where you dealt with a crazy person. Did you judge the situation right?

SHARING ACTIVITY

Activity Idea

- Play a name game today. Talk about the importance of hearing your own name, and knowing everyone's names to make a community strong.

Icebreaker Questions

- What does knowing someone's name or more about their story do to the way you see or judge someone?

Message Main Points

- Jesus makes a trip across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes, in a region near the Decapolis. Those from these Greek 10 cities were outsiders, gentiles, not part of the community. Jesus trip shows his commitment to belonging for all!
- The shackled, demon possessed, crazy man was exiled to the gravesite outside the city. He was a lost cause, seen as a menace to society.
- There is a cost to this healing. 2000 pigs die and the finances of the city are in ruin. No wonder the people were not happy with Jesus!
- What is the cost when we welcome others into our community? Who will push back if we try to build a culture of belonging? What do we do about that?

Discussion Questions

- What is your take on demon possession? Does it happen today? What do we do about it?
- We can't be Jesus, but how can we pray better for the outsiders in our lives? How can we keep them on our mind? Hopefully, by praying and thinking then we can listen better to the Holy Spirit's prodding as we try to welcome everyone.

"I will come and heal him."

PREPARATION

Read Matthew 8:5-13

notice main ideas, points of tension, and any connections for your youth

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Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where trusting in authority helped you

SHARING ACTIVITY

Activity Idea

- On a whiteboard or extra large paper, have the group draw or write out the perfect boss. What are the things we need to see in a boss for us to submit?

Icebreaker Questions

- Is it easy for you to submit to authority or difficult? Is it easy for you to make Jesus the authority in your life? Why?

Message Main Points

- The Roman officer clearly cares for his servant, but he also does not need to go so out of his way to help him. He is just a lowly servant. It reminds us that the power and influence we have should be used to help those in need, and especially those who are less privileged.
- Verse 11 is a sweeping declaration of the kind of kingdom Jesus is building. From east and west, all are welcome.
- The thing that unifies us despite our differences is Jesus. He is the organizing factor in our lives, and we are to give him authority.
- Not only should we act as a people of belonging, we need to BELIEVE that doing so is the way of the kingdom. It is not enough to be polite, we must believe that everyone being a part of our community is the best way forward.

Discussion Questions

- Do you love others with your whole heart, half heart, or even less? What can you do to believe in Jesus message of inclusion and belonging?
- The Roman soldier is the enemy to most Jews, but to Jesus that is not an issue at all. How do we make non-issues barriers in today's culture?

“Am I some dangerous revolutionary?”

PREPARATION

Read Luke 22:49-62, John 18:10-15
notice main ideas, points of tension,
and any connections for your youth

Listen to the Series

listen to the *Crosswalk Daily Study*
podcast and the *Abide Daily* podcast
and sit in the texts with our pastors

Reflect on your Experience

find a story in your life where the
pressure pushed you to selfishness

Activity Idea

- Today's story would be a fun one to act out. Set up some signs and costumes youth can wear. Have a narrator read the Bible passage as the selected youth act it out in front of the larger group. Make it fun!

Icebreaker Questions

- What part of the story jumped out at you? How is this about belonging and our themes from this series?

Message Main Points

- This week's stories contain moments of conflict, discomfort, and failure. These are the moments where it is hardest to live for the sake of belonging, but we must.
- Jesus' surrender at his arrest is inspiring. When he is accused, he chooses to heal the one who came to hurt him.
- Often we are like Peter. We are part of Jesus' way of life, and then when we feel pressure and tension we fight back, we lie, we get embarrassed, or we deny being with certain groups to be included.
- We know the end of Peter's story, so we know that Jesus not only forgives him, but trusts him to lead his church and the movement that follows. Living in the way of Jesus means being willing to extend forgiveness.
- There is no greater moment of extending belonging to someone than to welcome and forgive them after they hurt you.

Discussion Questions

- Who do you need to forgive? Who have you kept on the outside of the circle that you need to bring in?
- Is there someone you need to seek out and ask for forgiveness?



A Final Note,

Life gets crazy. Sometimes we walk into a room knowing we haven't prepped enough. A high-schooler might walk in with the weight of a hard week on their minds, and the last place they want to be is youth group. The teenage community you are leading will have cliques, crazy couples, and apathetic kids. All this to say that teaching in this scenario will rarely feel like you did a great job. Don't worry, you don't need to. **Jesus shows up.**

If every week you:

eat together,

pray together,

worship together,

and study the word together,

then you have faithfully structured the youth time for God to work.

Thank you for your effort and compassionate heart.

I'm a leader in the church because of influencers like you!

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