



SANDALS CHURCH MEN
ADVANCE **SEASON 6**

ALIENS.
PORN AND
PETER PANS



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Down the main street of a city's downtown, a large group of people are holding signs and chanting something in unison. They are walking single file toward the city's heart with a message, or a demand rather, of change. This group of people, all connected by a similar belief have actually transformed, or evolved rather, into something singular and massive. Giving up their individuality, they blend together into one giant snake slithering along the road. An idea has taken hold of their consciousness.

This is a protest. A sight that became somewhat commonplace on the evening news, social media feeds, or even your own neighborhood. Slogans were coined and the two halves that make up this country either loved or hated them. A divide grew bigger and bigger across the sand and it all became us and them.

Hopes of achieving justice, hopes of making the world a better place, were turned into action and everything that ensued was human and familiar. Looting by opportunists unmarried to any moral connection to any cause became ammunition for one side. Then the other side did something which led the other to respond. Then and, then and, then again the wheel of agenda went around like a saw cutting away at everything.

Social media was radioactive - leaving no user of it completely clean. Blocking and canceling like a virtual hit squad out for blood. It was nasty, it still is. A virus exposed another one that we'd been infected with ever since Eve took a bite of that apple I suppose.

In this hellscape of revolving right and wrong I looked around and found no middle. I also, and there is no shock in this discovery, found no men. Where did they go? Were they ever here? Do men care about justice? Do they have opinions that matter enough to transfer into action? I see no men here in the trenches, only echoes or silence.

Jesus was not silent, nor did he consult a political party when speaking his thoughts on a matter. He didn't hide from the conflict and there was nothing apathetic about the way his beaten and bloody body hung to die on a cross that stood up to the ultimate injustice. I know we can't be exactly like Jesus, but it's high time that we start trying.

For better or much, much, worse men have been given the duty of leading and if this last year has taught me anything, it's that this pandemic of masculine silence, apathy and political worship is more deadly than anything. Worst of all is how ignorant we are of our infection.

What would happen if men, the ones that follow Jesus specifically, were a fraction as devoted to the church as they were to an elephant or donkey? What would happen if these men spoke out about real injustice, like Jesus did? What if they were able to listen to other opinions? What would happen if men cared?

QUESTIONS

For the Group After the Video

1. With social media, the news, podcasts, etc. it seems like everyone has and professes strong opinions on every topic, how has this personally affected your life this last year?
2. 2020 felt like the year of protests, did you take part in any?
3. Do you tend to remain silent or speak out on political/economical issues? Why?
4. What kind of balance is there to be had in responding to hot topics?
5. What kind of balance is there to be had in caring about things and avoiding apathy? What does it look like to pursue justice while we are here on Earth?
6. Why don't many men volunteer at church? Why are they so needed?
7. What would the church look like if men got serious about serving their church?



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WEEK 5 • VIRTUE SIGNALING

Day 1: Parable of the Talents

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen”

WINSTON CHURCHILL

READ: Matthew 25:14-30

EXPLORE THE THEME: Parables are short fictional stories that Jesus would use as examples to explain a specific and real concept. Throughout the gospels, Jesus tells all kinds of parables. Each one as applicable and truthful today as they were two thousand years ago. He used them like tools to teach the reader (or listener at the time) about God’s nature. He told these stories so that we may get to know him and what he cares about.

In a way they are kind of like comic books. There isn’t a good guy fighting bad guys in New York that swings from building to building by way of webs he shoots from his wrists, but there really is good and evil. Gotham is not a real place, nor the Arkham Asylum, but the danger of chaos promised by the Joker is a very true and realistic threat faced by every city (even the fictional ones). The author is using fictional characters like Spiderman or Batman to explore nonfictional themes. Themes (or things) that every average, and non-superhero, Joe experiences on a daily basis.

So, when you read this passage, try to think of the bigger moral (or concept) that is being taught.

WRITE IT OUT: What are some of your favorite movies or books? Why do you enjoy them so much? Do you think they had deeper meanings/morals than the plot explicitly states? Have you ever thought about movies or books like that? As you read through the parable, write down anything that sticks out to you. Pray as you read, asking God to open your eyes to what is being taught, what the deeper meaning is. Write down what you think the moral of the story is and make sure to write it down somewhere you can refer back to it later this week.

LIVE IT OUT: During this week, partner up with someone from your group or community again like you did last week. It can be the same guy or a different one, just make sure you partner up. Each day that you read this parable again and get to the “write it out” part, send a quick text, or phone call, or meet up and discuss what you have written down in response to the question asked. If there is something you feel like you aren’t understanding, be honest and say so. If you think that you can help the other guy understand better, share what you think. Work through this parable together and explore the vast, mysterious and incredible nature of God together.

WEEK 5 • VIRTUE SIGNALING

Day 2: Talents and Abilities

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen”

WINSTON CHURCHILL

READ: Matthew 25:14-30

EXPLORE THE THEME: The parable opens up with a man doling out talents to three of his servants before he embarks on a journey and leaves town for a bit. A talent literally translates to “a monetary unit worth about twenty years’ wages for a laborer,” so it’s safe to assume that all three guys were very trusted by the man they served. We also know that the man knew his servants well as he gave them each a differing amount of talents based on their ability.

Another thing that this tells us is that the talents are valuable and something that the three servants could have never earned on their own. You can imagine that each one of the servants, regardless of how many they received, felt a bit of anxiety and responsibility toward what they were given to hold onto.

Pull back as you read and ask yourself questions about the parable. Who does the man represent? Who are the servants in this story? Talents may be some kind of ancient currency or exactly what the word suggests: talents.

Read the whole parable again today, but really focus on these observations.

WRITE IT OUT: In this parable three men are given talents (amounts of money) by their master to watch over while he is out on a journey. It says they were all given different amounts based on their abilities. In pushing to find the deeper meaning; take a look at your life currently. What talents have you been given by God? It doesn’t have to be financial or tangible, in fact it can be something intangible like being good with people, or being in a place of leadership at work or your community. Talents can be things that you might not consider valuable but, according to this parable, they are much more treasured than you realize. Write down what your talents are.

LIVE IT OUT: Make sure you talk with your partner today and go over the things you wrote down. Allow enough time for you both to share your thoughts/notes. Affirm the “talents” that you see in your own life and point out the talents you have observed of each other. Together, discuss the part about the servants being given the talents based on their ability. What do you guys think that means? What do you think your own ability is and do you think you’re using it to its full potential?

WEEK 5 ▪ VIRTUE SIGNALING

Day 3: Talent Investment 101

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen”

WINSTON CHURCHILL

READ: Matthew 25:14-30

EXPLORE THE THEME: The man leaves for his journey and the three men all go separate ways with the talents they had been entrusted with. The first guy takes the money and doubles it by trading. There is not a lot of information provided on what exactly he did, so we can only guess at the specifics. Perhaps he had some experience in trading prior to receiving the talents, perhaps his family or friends were all in the trading business, who knows? What we can deduct is that he was trusted with the most talents because his master had known him to have the most ability. The second guy, with two talents, also doubles his talents. Again, no specifics, but he was successful in whatever it was. Last and entrusted the least, the guy with one talent goes and buries it in the ground to ensure its safety.

The third man, the one with the least, was unwilling to do the one thing that the other two did with their talents. He refused the risk of using his talent and hid it out of fear.

Just like yesterday, read the whole thing but really key in on these points.

WRITE IT OUT: Referring back to what you have written down yesterday, and the special attributes you have identified in your own life, what are you doing with the talents you have been entrusted with? Are you making use of them or are you hoarding them? Write down your response to those questions.

LIVE IT OUT: Partnering up again today, discuss what you have written down from the question above. Take turns asking each other questions about what was written and any other questions that might come up. As you both discuss the things you have been given, end your time together praying and thanking God for all that he has provided for you

WEEK 5 • VIRTUE SIGNALING

Day 4: Lucy, I'm home!

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen”

WINSTON CHURCHILL

READ: Matthew 25:14-30

EXPLORE THE THEME: At long last, the master returns from his journey and settles up with his three servants. The first man, the one entrusted with the most, returns the talents twofold. This pleases the master and he appoints the man over more, entrusting him with even more. Servant number two also gives back what he was given doubled and the master is elated. He tells him that because he was faithful with little he will entrust him with much. Third and final servant comes back with exactly what he was left with, no less and no more. The servant then blames the master for his choice citing his powerful nature as an excuse to bury the talent in the ground like a dead thing. Like something that shouldn't be used and seen by the world.

This enrages the master and has him cast, essentially, into hell. Seems a bit extreme of a response doesn't it? It's not like the guy spent it on a new house or wardrobe. He wasn't irresponsible with the treasure he was trusted with, in fact, he was more responsible with it than the other two.

What, then, does this teach us about their master?

WRITE IT OUT: Why do you think the master responded the way he did? What does this teach you about God? Does this make you consider the way you are currently living your life? What things can you start doing to make more use of your talents today?

LIVE IT OUT: Partner up and go over your responses from the question above. Be honest and open in your conversations. Offer advice and affirmation as you guys try to figure out how your talents can be put more to use. As you finish your time talking to each other, talk about what you hope to hear your master say the day you are called before him and are asked to show what you did with the things that were given to you.

WEEK 5 • VIRTUE SIGNALING

Day 5: Parable of the Talents Redux

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen”

WINSTON CHURCHILL

READ: Matthew 25:14-30

EXPLORE THE THEME: Read the parable for a final time to close out this week. Look back on the things you wrote on day one and see if your understanding of this parable has changed at all. Pray as you review this story once again.

What does this parable have to do with the things discussed in this week's video or this week's topic of virtue signaling? Everything. Absolutely everything.

We were all created by a God that knows us on an atomic level. He knows what movies we love, what food we hate, and what potential we have in us. He made us, as men specifically, to use the things he gave us to fight for justice and his church. We have all been given different talents, resources, and platforms that we can use to either spread the gospel or for our own agenda. We can bury our heads in the sand like that servant did with his talent and be apathetic to the world around us, but that is not what God desires of us. We must, absolutely must, be active in this fight that is life. The comic book good and evil is real and we are in a literal war with it. With wisdom, community, God's favor, and the gifts he created us with, we are to be warriors for all that is good. We are to take our master's gold into this world and double it before we meet again.

WRITE IT OUT: After spending a week on this parable, what have you learned about God? What have you learned about our role as men when it comes to issues that are present in society today? What do you think your responsibility is to your church and the gospel after this week of study? How are you going to take actions to start living in this way?

LIVE IT OUT: Partner up one final time to go over the things you have written down. Go over the action steps that you came up with to start doubling the talents God has given you. How can you help the men in your lives be less apathetic and more engaged/caring about real issues in society? How can you help the men in your life to not fade into the white noise of society's current culture of canceling and outrage while still standing up for what is right? Take some time to discuss and pray over each other as you end that you may go out and inspire men to make similar changes and endeavors.