

HOW IN THE WORLD DID I END UP HERE?

Have you ever found yourself in a crazy situation and wondered to yourself, “How in the world did I end up here?” When I was in middle school, I hung out with some crazy guys who loved trouble. These guys had a fondness for destruction. We TPed the same girl’s house every weekend for six months. We forked people’s yards, egged cars and generally did damaging stuff to people’s property...yup, these were my friends.

One night I found myself miles away from home, laying prone in a farmer’s field in the dead of winter as a police spotlight scanned the field a few inches over my head. Why was I there do you ask? Great question.

Well, my friends thought it would be a good idea to light a roll of 500 powerful fire crackers and toss it into some guy’s satellite dish. Afterward we ran like cheetahs until a police spotlight forced us to hug the frozen earth.

It was in that moment that I asked myself, “Self...How in the world did you end up here?” Then, lying there, freezing, I clicked my heels together and repeated, “There’s no place like home. There’s no place like home.” Turns out that doesn’t work.

But for real, how did I get there? I was following the crowd. I was doing what everyone else was doing. I didn’t know it then but it was the Law of Magnets. What’s the Law of Magnets? We’ll get there. I’ll give you a hint. It starts with a crowd.

PILATE AND THE MOB

Throughout the Jesus story there are crowds. Jesus was extremely popular and crowds followed him everywhere he went. They were usually for Him. But in one crucial moment, they were violently opposed to him.

Near the end of his life, Jesus was betrayed by one of his own disciples and handed over to the religious leaders—guys who hated Jesus and wanted him dead. Not having the power to execute Jesus themselves, they took him to Pilate who was the Roman governor of the region.

They accused him of leading an insurrection. Pilate investigated the situation and found that Jesus had done nothing wrong—nothing worth execution or even imprisonment.

Luke 23

Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people,¹⁴ and he announced his verdict. “You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent... I will release him.”

Pilate isn't a bad guy. He's a government official trying to do the right thing. But then things get crazy. Check it out:

¹⁸Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, "Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!" ¹⁹(Barabbas was in prison for taking part in an insurrection in Jerusalem against the government, and for murder.) ²⁰Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. ²¹But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

²²For the third time he demanded, "Why? What crime has he committed? I have found no reason to sentence him to death. So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him."

²³But the mob shouted louder and louder, demanding that Jesus be crucified, and their voices prevailed. ²⁴So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded. ²⁵As they had requested, he released Barabbas, the man in prison for insurrection and murder. But he turned Jesus over to them to do as they wished.

THE LAW OF MAGNETS

This story blows my mind because Pilate wasn't a bad guy. Jesus was 100% innocent and yet a crowd, influenced by the religious leaders convinced Pilate to release a known murderer and insurrectionist and execute a completely innocent man. It just doesn't make any sense. It doesn't make any sense, that is, unless, you understand the Law of Magnets.

In this series, called Gravity, we've been looking at laws of nature. Laws that simply exist, whether we like it or not. The law for tonight is the Law of Magnets. The Law of Magnets has everything to do with crowds because, you see, crowds are powerfully magnetic. They have a way of influencing people. Maybe it's because we are afraid of what they think, or that we want to fit in, but whatever the reason crowds powerfully influence the way we think and act.

It doesn't matter if we are young or old, strong or weak, male or female, there is something about a crowd that is magnetic. They will pull us in and influence us to become like them—to join in doing whatever they are doing.

This is what happened to me with the firecrackers and the satellite dish and this is what happened to Pilate in Jerusalem when he released a murderer and agreed to crucify Jesus. And, let's be honest, this is what happens to you too. I'm sure you can think of a few times in which a crowd magnetically pulled you into its orbit and you joined in with whatever it was doing.

Maybe it was with words. You were sitting around the lunch table and everyone was making fun of that girl in your class. It was rude. It was degrading but everyone was doing it and the next thing you knew you were joining them. You said something about her and afterward you thought to yourself, "Why in the world did I say that?" It's the Law of Magnets.

Maybe you were at a friend's house and one minute it was video games and the next it was, "Hey let's watch this, or smoke this, or drink this and you were like, "WHAT?" and yet, the crowd was all doing it and so, you joined in. It's the Law of Magnets. The power of the crowd pulled you in.

FEEL THE POWER

Like all the other laws we've been talking about in this series, we need to acknowledge that the Law of Magnets is real. We are humans. We are easily influenced. We don't like to be the weird one. We don't like to be on the outside. Crowds have a powerful influence on us. No one is immune. No one is stronger than the Law of magnets. We are all human. We are all easily influenced. We have to come to terms with this reality. We can either pay attention to The Law of Magnets, or we can ignore it and get swept up in the magnetic pull of the crowd.

HOW'S YOUR CROWD?

I have a question for you: **Who is your crowd?** Who is the group that influences you? Maybe it's your circle of "besties," your football team, or the cast from the musical you were recently in. Who is your crowd?

Here's an even better question: **How is your crowd?** Where does your crowd pull you? Does it pull you to a healthier place or does it pull you in a darker place? Is your crowd leading you closer in your relationship with Jesus or further away? When you're with your crowd do you find yourself continually asking, "How in the world did I end up here?"

Take a good look at your crowd. Is this the direction you want to be pulled? The Law of Magnets says that the more time you spend with them the more you'll become like them. That's just how life works.

So...how's your crowd? Maybe it's time to evaluate who is influencing you. It's the Law of Magnets.