



SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 2 February 26, 2023
"Everyone is Invited"

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus to tear down the obstacles that can keep us from you; and thank you for making your kingdom near and inviting to participate. But Father, you know that we don't always make 'everyone' feel welcome. Today, help us to face our fear, insecurity, and prejudice head-on, so that we might make everyone feel welcome in your kingdom. We pray this in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

Mark 1:38-45 (NIV)

³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

⁴¹ Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" ⁴² Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

⁴³ Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴ "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." ⁴⁵ Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed

outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Mark 2:2-5 (NIV)

² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Mark 2:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. ¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

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INTRODUCTION

Over and over again Jesus proclaimed the good news: “The Kingdom of God is near and everyone is invited to participate.” Jesus then proceeded to remove three obstacles to God by ignoring certain religious protocol, claiming to have the authority to forgive sins, and being comfortable with unrepentant sinners. So what does that mean for us today?

Jesus demonstrated and said that God accepts sinners and invites them into a new kind of kingdom. As a result, Jesus followers were faced with a choice: Do we walk away and save our reputation, or do we repent and believe the good news? Mark, documenting Peter's experience with Jesus, tells us that this new way would continue to collide with Peter's way. He would have to face fear, insecurity, and prejudice head-on. We must do the same.

QUESTIONS

1. When you hear the term “faith” in a religious context what do you assume it means?
2. Read Mark 2:2–5 on page 1.
 - What stands out to you?
 - What did Jesus see that he equated with faith?
3. We've all had unanswered prayers. Have you ever been blamed - or blamed yourself - for not having enough faith?
4. Read Mark 1:38–45 on page 1.
 - What stands out to you?
 - Look at verses 39–40. How much faith did the leper have? Apparently, it was enough.
5. Read Mark 2:13–14 on page 1.
 - What stands out to you?
 - Given that Levi was probably viewed as corrupt, how would Jesus' inner circle have felt when Jesus invited Levi into their group?
 - What lessons can we learn from Jesus' invitation to Levi?

FINAL APPLICATION

“The kingdom of God is near, and everyone is invited to participate.” Who can you make feel welcome in the Kingdom of God this week?