

Sick of Religion?

Weekly Devotional

A ministry of Chapel Hill

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WEEK 1

This devotional pairs with Mark 1:40-45 and the sermon preached at Chapel Hill February 23-24.



Written by Mel Watt

I have been a member of Chapel Hill for four years with my wife, Patty. We started a LifeGroup four months ago in our home. I have a MDiv and enjoy Bible study and I work as a psychologist full-time. I am part of the writing, greeting, and the prayer ministry teams at Chapel Hill.

LifeGroup Guide

Story: Mark 1:40-45

Head

How was Jesus' willingness to touch a leper wondrous in its original time and context? Why would this have been shocking for a Jewish audience to witness and read about?

What posture did the leper take as he approached Jesus? What does this show us about his desire for help, and who he thought Jesus was?

Jesus still touches the ugly, sick, broken and untouchable. How does this small interaction help us to see the bigger story of the gospel—Jesus as the one who takes upon himself the brokenness of others, in order to bring cleansing and healing to all?

Heart

How can we mimic the “imploring” and “kneeling” of the leper in how we come to Jesus? Do a heart check on yourself. Is this your attitude about your own needs when you approach Jesus?

Have you ever felt untouchable, unwanted, or rejected? When has Christ and his church helped to turn this around to a feeling of being wanted and included?

Hands

What have you been imploring Jesus for in prayer for a long time? Pray together as a group over the needs we can get tired of sharing. Ask God for a renewed vision of his willingness to heal and answer our requests.

What did Jesus want the leper to do in response to his healing? This response would have been a marker in the sand to both the leper and the priest of Christ's healing power. How do you express your thankfulness to God for his work in your life and how does it give glory to God? Find one small way this week to give testimony to the power of Christ at work in your life.

Pray

DAY 1
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:40-41

Ask

How was Jesus' willingness to touch a leper wondrous in its original time and context? Why would this have been shocking for a Jewish audience to witness and read about?

Reflect

Jesus did not need to touch the leper in order to physically heal him. Several times he only spoke a word to heal, even in the next few chapters (Mark 2:11, Mk. 3:3-5, Mk. 5:8, etc.). For centuries, lepers were not to be touched and had to live outside the community. Those who came near the leper had to call out "Unclean, unclean! (Leviticus 13:45-46). If anyone touched them they would then be unclean just as if they touched a dead person (Numbers 5:1-3). Remember how shocking that must have been for the Jews to see Jesus actually touching the leper, based on the above Scriptures in the Old Testament. Spend a moment reflecting on this important background information and consider why you think Jesus chose to touch him in the healing.

The leper needed to be healed spirit, soul and body since he had been rejected by people and not touched for so long. Touch was essential in the healing process for this leper to be healed psychologically and spiritually. Jesus, always loves us and is moved with pity (compassion) and knows what we need to be completely healed. How have you seen or experienced touch being part of the healing process? Share this with your LifeGroup.

DAY 2

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:40-41

Ask

What posture did the leper take as he approached Jesus? What does this show us about his desire for help, and who he thought Jesus was?

Reflect

How do we approach Jesus? Sometimes we forget about how we talk with God. Do we tend to ask him for things or do we only talk to him when we need something? Certainly it is good to approach God at any time, particularly when we are in need, but we can all learn from this story and examine our patterns of communication with God. Do we approach Him with the posture of humility, as shown by kneeling? Is our desire to ask for help persistent and full of faith, as shown by imploring? "If you will" also indicates humility with a lack of presumption. But again, he said, "you can make me clean" which reveals his faith in Jesus' ability to heal.

It might be helpful to review these few verses with these insights and questions. Share with your group how you approach Jesus. Do you consistently approach with humility, persistence and faith? If you are comfortable, share your struggles in this area and give an example of your tendencies in prayer. It is helpful to remember the acronym ACTS and you could discuss that as well: Adoration...Confession...Thanksgiving... and Supplication. When we make supplication (in other words make our requests) to God are we humble? Do we also adore Him in worship, confess our faults and do we spend time in thanksgiving when we pray?

DAY 3
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:40-41

Ask

Jesus still touches the ugly, sick, broken and untouchable. How does this small interaction help us to see the bigger story of the gospel - Jesus as the one who takes upon himself the brokenness of others, in order to bring cleansing and healing to all?

Reflect

Jesus reached out and touched him because he was moved with pity or compassion. He was willing and he touched him. In the same way, Jesus touches those who are considered ugly, sick, broken and untouchable according to this world. That includes us. Our sin is ugly, sick and broken and we feel untouchable. Jesus took that brokenness. "Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray we gave turned- every one- to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53: 4-6).

God prioritizes love and healing in our lives. Consider how the leper is a metaphor for sin. There can be no sin in the presence of a holy God. Instead of ignoring our condition as God, in His holiness, could have done, he took on our sin and Scripture teaches he who knew no sin actually became sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor 5:21). Jesus touched the leper to heal him and he touched us by humbling himself to die for us. "Though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing taking on the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Phil. 2:6-8).

DAY 4
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:40-41

Ask

How can we mimic the “imploring” and “kneeling” of the leper in how we come to Jesus? Do a heart check on yourself. Is this your attitude about your own needs when you approach Jesus?

Reflect

How do I approach God? Do I kneel before him at least at times in my prayer life? I became a Christian at 16 and had a love for His word. When I was in my 20’s I had an experience when I was praying on my knees and I spent time listening to God. It was not my usual habit to pray on my knees, but I felt impressed to pray that way at the time. As I was listening I had a distinct sense that God was giving me a specific verse to look up. The verse was Psalm 95:6, which I did not know at the time: “Come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker.” Needless to say this was quite a confirmation that it is good to pray on my knees before God.

Often God will speak to us by his Word and with comfort, reassurance and direction when we pray and listen, particularly when we are humble before him. Have you had a sense of God speaking to you when you humbled yourself before him? It may help to share your experience with the group and to ask others to share some of their experiences.

DAY 5
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:40-41

Ask

Have you ever felt untouchable, unwanted, or rejected? When has Christ and his church helped to turn this around to a feeling of being wanted and included?

Reflect

Many people have experienced a time of feeling unloved, unwanted or rejected. This certainly happens after a break-up in a relationship, but also from misunderstandings and conflict in families and between friends. Because God is love, he is always moved with compassion when we are suffering and he will provide a way to meet our deep needs. As the leper in his condition did not have much hope of healing or even anyone physically touching him, we may feel that our situation is impossible. But, with God nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37). Jesus came along and met the leper's deepest need for love, including being touched. He was being affirmed that he is a human being made in the image of God and that he is valuable and loved.

Think of some examples when you have been in need and how God met your needs. Has God ministered directly to you or through someone in his church? God often speaks through us in times of quietness or nature which is often referred to as the still small voice from Elijah (1 Kings 19:12). This would be another good topic to talk about with your LifeGroup—have a time together considering the concepts of humility, persistent listening and openness to God and the work of His Holy Spirit ministering to us in times of deep need.

DAY 6
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:40-41

Ask

What have you been imploring Jesus for in prayer for a long time? Pray together as a group over the needs we can get tired of sharing. Ask God for a renewed vision of his willingness to heal and answer our requests.

Reflect

Have you ever implored the Lord for something? A good example is the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8. Although the judge in the parable was not righteous or just, he granted the woman's request because of her persistence. How much more will God answer our prayers since He is willing and wants love and healing in our lives. It could be helpful look at the story of the persistent widow in your LifeGroup, and to read parts of the parable as a good example of the importance of persistence and faith.

My wife and I pray daily for our children and all of our relationships have improved over time, but we have also had many trials. Nevertheless, we continue to persistently pray. Share some of your experiences with your Lifegroup and ask others to share their experiences with imploring God. This would be good time to write down prayer requests and pray specifically for them as a group. We need to remind ourselves that: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb. 13:8) and he wants to answer our prayers.

DAY 7
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 1:40-45

Ask

What did Jesus want the leper to do in response to his healing? This response would have been a marker in the sand to both the leper and the priest of Christ's healing power. How do you express your thankfulness to God for his work in your life and how does it give glory to God? Find one small way this week to give testimony to the power of Christ at work in your life.

Reflect

The leper was healed and Jesus asked him to go to the priest and offer a sacrifice, which was the guideline from the Old Testament in Leviticus 14:1-9. This checking with the priest who went outside the camp to meet with the leper was to be a proof to them. They could see the healing and release the leper from his need to be outside the camp.

In the same way today, if you are healed from an infirmity, it is good to go to a doctor and have them do a checkup. This could be an opportunity for your own faith to be built, and potentially also to give testimony to them regarding the healing work of God. Speaking from personal experience, this is a great way to be sure that you have indeed been healed, and are getting the ongoing medical care that you need.

Discuss the story of the leper and Jesus' request for the leper to show himself to the priest. Has anyone in your LifeGroup known anyone who was healed and went to their doctors for confirmation and a testimony? Ask group members, how is God healing you this week? This could be physical, spiritual, or emotional healing. Find one small way this week to give testimony to the power of Christ at work in your life.
