

The Questions Before the Question

Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. If you could ask one question of somebody living today, who would it be and what would you ask?
2. Do you like other people to know when it's your birthday? Explain.

Read the following passage: Luke 8:1-15.

God has a purpose for our lives. But most of us experience seasons in which other issues cloud our ability to see this purpose clearly. The parable of the sower describes some of these issues as life's "worries, riches, and pleasures." Jesus often exposed key obstacles by asking questions. The Gospel of John records a number of these questions. "What are you looking for?" "Do you want to get well?" "Is that your own idea?" We can use these questions in our own lives to help us understand the obstacles that may be preventing us from seeing God's purpose for our lives.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Many first-century Jews expected the Messiah to crush Rome and lead Israel to a position of political prominence. How might these expectations have made it difficult for some people to receive what God was doing through Jesus' ministry?
2. Our desires are a fundamental part of who we are. In fact, Jesus often alluded to our desires in his teaching. "If you want to enter life..." "If you want to be perfect..." "If you want to be great..." "If you want to get well..." What are some of the most significant desires shaping your life right now? Are these the desires you want to be shaping your life? Explain. What are some of the influences having the greatest impact on what you desire?
3. The woman at the well in John 4 did not expect to have a meaningful interaction with Jesus because of their respective identities; she was a Samaritan woman with a difficult past and he was a Jewish rabbi. How might our sense of identity either cloud our understanding of God's purpose for our lives or fuel our understanding of God's purpose for our lives?
4. Jesus asked a man with a long-standing and obvious physical ailment, "Do you want to get well?" It's likely that Jesus's question went beyond his concern with the man's physical well-being. In what sense might embracing God's purpose for our lives require us to "get well" or make changes? Can you think of any areas in your own life in which you are prone to resist growth or change? Explain.

5. When Pilate was caught between Jesus's innocence and the demands of the religious leaders, Pilate ultimately followed the loudest voice and delivered Jesus over to be crucified. Are there any loud voices that you think you may need to ignore in order to embrace God's purpose for your life? Explain.
6. What do you think is the greatest obstacle to embracing God's purpose in your life right now? What might help you overcome this obstacle?

Pray