

What's the Problem? 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. What is one way in which you think you are good at helping other people?
2. Do you have trouble asking for help when you need it? Explain.

Read the following passage: Mark 2:1-17.

As news got out that Jesus was healing people, increasingly large crowds came to him to experience a miracle. When four men brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus to be healed, Jesus' response was surprising: "Son, your sins are forgiven." Jesus' words teach us something profound: the most important thing that Jesus offers to us is forgiveness. Some of us, like the Pharisees, might resist this message. Do I really want to admit that I'm a sinner? Or maybe religious people have pummeled me with the message of sin when I was in pain or in need. Or maybe I think the categories of sin, guilt, and shame are outdated, or even harmful. Wherever we might find ourselves, Jesus continues to extend the offer of forgiveness to broken people like us.

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

1. Why did the Pharisees accuse Jesus of blasphemy when he told the paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven? What does Jesus' response to their accusations suggest about Jesus' understanding of his own identity?
2. Have you ever experienced a miracle? Do you know anyone else who has experienced a miracle? Explain. Overall, how skeptical are you when you hear someone say that they have experienced a miracle? Are there any areas in your life in which you would like to see God perform a miracle?
3. Why did the Pharisees disapprove of Jesus eating meals with "sinners and tax collectors?" Similarly, why would they be offended by Jesus' statement, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners?"
4. Overall, do you find yourself embracing or resisting the idea that you need God's forgiveness? Do you ever struggle with not feeling forgiven even after you've asked God to forgive you? Explain. Do you ever confess your sins to other people, as James advised (James 5:16)?
5. Have you ever been tempted to give up trying to live a "righteous" life altogether? Explain.

6. How would you describe what it means to be humble? What is one way you could grow in humility?
7. Are there any areas of your life you feel ashamed of? Have you ever talked to another person about any of those areas? How can God help us address our shame?

Pray