



WHITE RIVER CHRISTIAN CHURCH

LOVE GOD AND LOVE OTHERS

IF JESUS FACEBOOKED

SERMON SERIES DISCUSSION & STUDY GUIDE

Sermon Schedule

Date	Series	Key Event	Scripture
6/21/2009	If Jesus Facebooked	is forgiving sins and some people don't like that!!	Mark 2:1-12
6/28/2009	If Jesus Facebooked	is hanging out with sinners.	Mark 2:13-17
7/5/2009	If Jesus Facebooked	and his disciples are NOT fasting right now!	Mark 2:18-22
7/12/2009	If Jesus Facebooked	is healing people on the Sabbath :)	Mark 2:23-28
7/19/2009	If Jesus Facebooked	is telling others why man-made tradition can get you into trouble.	Mark 7:9-13
7/26/2009	If Jesus Facebooked	is not falling for the trap about paying taxes!	Mark 12:13-17

Life with Jesus

If Jesus Facebooked...

Week 1: Jesus Is Forgiving Sins (and some people don't like that!)

Mark 2:1-12

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Standing up to authority is dangerous – it can get you in a lot of trouble. For the typical Jew in Jesus' day, it would never have crossed his or her mind to deliberately challenge the authority of the Pharisees and religion-law professors. Yet Jesus seemed driven to point out, time after time, these leaders' stubborn attitudes of hypocrisy. The leaders thought they were leading the Jews to God. In fact, they were driving them away from Him.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

Jesus used the work and actions of a small group, who were helping one of their group members, to point out the hypocrisy of the religious leaders and teachers.

- Share a time when your small group (or another group you were part of) banded together to get help for someone in need.
- Talk about the risks involved, the doubt and uncertainty you felt about helping out.
- Was there a positive outcome to your efforts? Was it immediate, or was it delayed? Did the result of your efforts exceed your expectations?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Read the account of this incident in Mark 2:1-12; (see also in Matthew 9:1-8 and Luke 5:17-26).

Jesus' popularity was climbing as he preached the Word, taught and discussed it with his disciples and the people, and performed a variety of miracles and healings to back up his claims. But he also had already cleared out the Temple, interfering with the money-making activities of the Pharisees. In their seething anger, they were determined, one way or another, to get rid of Jesus.

- Verse 2 says that Jesus was preaching and discussing the Word with the crowd. Do you think this preaching and teaching had anything to do with the forgiveness and healing that was about to take place?
- Verse 6 says that, after Jesus saw the faith of the four friends (not the paralytic), he spoke forgiveness to the paralyzed man. What does this say about acting in faith on behalf of someone else?
- How would you answer Jesus's question in verse 9?
- Why do you think Jesus proclaimed forgiveness of sins first before healing the paralytic?

MAKING APPLICATION:

We may admire Jesus' courage in standing up to the religious leaders of his day, but we must remember he didn't confront them just for the sake of confrontation. Their religious traditions and hundreds of rules about "do this but don't do that" were choking the life out of the people they were charged with ministering to.

- Have we ever been guilty of withholding our love and acceptance of someone until he or she conforms to some rule or law, or meets some artificially-imposed requirement?
- How have our thoughts, attitudes and pre-conceived notions about the people in our lives hindered us from demonstrating and sharing God's love for them? Does God love them any more or any less than he loves you?
- Discuss this commentary: "It wasn't the paralyzed man's faith that impressed Jesus, but the faith of his friends. Jesus responded to their faith and healed the man. For better or worse, our faith affects others. We cannot make another person a Christian, but we can do much through our words, actions, and love to give him or her a chance to respond. Look for opportunities to bring your friends to the living Christ." (from the Life Application Study Bible, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.)

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

It's easy to get comfortable and settled in our attitudes about other people – political leaders, people we work with, even other Christians.

- Pray that God will break through any hardness in your heart that keeps you from seeing others as God sees them.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit who lives inside of you, will help you to think specifically of someone in the next week to whom you can show the love and acceptance of God.



Life with Jesus

If Jesus Facebooked...

Week 2: Jesus Is Hanging Out with Sinners!

Mark 2:13-17

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

"What would people think? What would they say?" How many times have those words steered our thoughts, attitudes and actions in our associations with other people? From about the time we enter school, it seems, we place more and more stock in how other people look at us (or, at least, how we THINK they look at us). The simple, two-word phrase for it is "peer pressure," and we live with that pressure for the rest of our lives.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

- Peer pressure is very prevalent among all of us, so it shouldn't be difficult to discuss a timely instance or two when this pressure affected our words or actions toward someone else. (Who wants to go first??) How did your words/actions affect the relationship?
- Do you know of anyone who consistently resisted peer pressure and "marched to the beat of his own drum"? How was that person characterized by others? Was he or she considered popular?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Read Mark 2:13-17 (also Matthew 9:9-13 and Luke 5:27-32)

Consider this profile of Matthew (also called Levi): "More than any other disciple, Matthew had a clear idea of how much it would cost to follow Jesus, yet he did not hesitate a moment. When he left his tax-collecting booth, he guaranteed himself unemployment. For several of the other disciples, there was always fishing to return to, but for Matthew, there was no turning back. Two changes happen to Matthew when he decided to follow Jesus. First, Jesus gave him a new life. He not only belonged to a new group; he belonged to the Son of God. He was not just accepting a different way of life; he was now an accepted person...Second, Jesus gave Matthew a new purpose for his skills...The only tool from his past job that he carried with him was his pen. From the beginning, God had made him a record-keeper...Matthew was a keen observer, and he undoubtedly recorded what he saw going on around him...Each of us, from the beginning, is one of God's works in progress. Much of what God has for us he gives us long before we are able to consciously respond to him. He trusts us with skills and abilities ahead of schedule." (From the Life Application Bible, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.)

MAKING APPLICATION:

- In Mark 2:16, the religious leaders refer to the banquet guests as "scum." Do we sometimes (or oftentimes) judge people by what we see on the outside? What are some ways in which we make those evaluations?
- In Matthew's account (Matt. 9:9-13), Matthew records Jesus saying in v. 13, "Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices.'" This was a quote from Hosea 6:6. What does this concept mean for us today? What "sacrifices" do we make that take the place of showing mercy?
- In the gospel account recorded by Luke, who was a physician, (Luke 5:27-32), Jesus responded to the religious leaders, "Healthy people don't need a doctor – sick people do. I have come to call sinners to turn from their sins, not spend time with those who think they are already good enough." How does Jesus call sinners to turn from their sins: by accusing and threatening them with the consequences of hell, or by showing deep love and acceptance? How should we follow his example when sharing the Gospel?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Clearly, Jesus resisted the pressure from his peers (the Jewish religious teachers and leaders) to conform to their rules and expectations. Ultimately, it cost him his life, because he confronted them so strongly. Their hearts were hardened to the truth that God loves us messy and stinky sinners, sets us free, and sets us on a path of growth and maturity that, over time, transforms us bit by bit into the likeness of Jesus.

- Pray for one another that the Holy Spirit will melt away our attitudes of condemnation, judgment and scorn toward other people we rub elbows with every day.
- Pray that the Spirit will open our eyes to see people, not as they are on the outside, but as they are on the inside. (Caution: this will probably mean spending more time (not less) with the people we deem to be unlovable!)
- Pray that we will be light and salt in a real and personal way to just one person in the week to come.



Life with Jesus

If Jesus Facebooked...

Week 3: Jesus and his Disciples are NOT fasting right now!

Mark 2:18-22

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Have you ever felt under the microscope? Ever sense that people were watching your every move? Every stage of life has pressure from others. In grade school, you didn't want to be the last person picked because that meant you weren't as good as the other kids. In the teen years, you had to have everything everyone else had so you would feel apart or included. As adults, the pressure comes in the type of house you live in, your place and position of employment, the size of your bank account.

Very often, this type of mentality finds its way into our spiritual lives. We often judge ourselves and others by the religious practices we keep, which creates a spiritual hierarchy to feel better about ourselves, many times by looking down at others. Jesus encountered this same type of scrutiny by those who felt superior to Him. ***Jesus placed more emphasis on the condition of one's heart than the practice of man made rituals.***

CONNECTING As A GROUP

Let's examine the pressure we feel when the unwritten expectations cause pressure in our lives.

- What is 1 expectation your immediate family has on you that seems unfair/unrealistic?
- What do your co-workers expect from you that isn't really part of the job responsibilities?
- How does your neighborhood place pressure on you to conform or keep up?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Jesus was constantly being criticized for not complying to the man made expectations of the religious leaders of his day. They constantly compared Him to their standards of religious living rather than to the holiness God expects of us. **Read**

Mark 2:18-22.

- Why did John's disciples and the Pharisees seem so interested in Jesus' practice of fasting?
- How did Jesus respond to their criticism?
- Why would fasting (which represents sorrow) not be appropriate at this time according to Jesus?
- What did Jesus try to explain to them by using the illustration of the old/new patch and old/new wineskins?
- How did this lesson from Jesus apply to the original question about fasting?

MAKING APPLICATION:

Jesus' focus on the heart above ritualistic practice indicates the correct filter from God's perspective. God is much more interested in the condition of our hearts than our mindless practice or submission to rituals. Jesus brings a new presence that cannot be confined by old forms. Jesus plainly assumed while teaching on the Sermon on the Mount, that fasting, prayer, and other practices would be part of the Christian life, just not measured by their frequency, but rather their devotion.

- How does your daily Bible reading, prayer time, or weekly worship participation reflect a mindless ritual?
- Would Jesus ask you to abstain from these if your heart was not fully devoted to Him? Why or why not?
- How is the presence of Jesus in your life filling you in ways different from before you had a relationship with Him?
- What is 1 way you have found helpful in maintaining the right perspective towards yourself and others in regards to your spiritual walk with Christ?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Jesus' desire was to bring us life to the fullest. He often removed the "yoke of the Pharisees" that burdened those trying to measure up to the human standards rather than enjoy the freedom they could find in following Him. **Read Matthew**

11:28-30.

- What is 1 burden you are currently carrying you need to surrender to Jesus?
- What words of affirmation do you need to hear from Jesus to experience the easy and light yoke He offers?
- How can this group pray for you as you attempt to maintain focus on God's approval and not anyone else's?



Life with Jesus

If Jesus Facebooked...

Week 4: Jesus is healing people on the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-28

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Have you ever been critiqued for doing something you knew was right? Perhaps you were at school one day, and wouldn't let the person next to you copy off your exam. That person ends up flunking the test, and gets enraged with you since you wouldn't share. Or how about when your driving down 37 and are actually going 55 MPH... isn't it amusing to watch how many people behind you get upset?! Jesus was critiqued for doing what was right in Mark chapter two. Our aim in this discussion is to understand why it was controversial- yet correct- for Jesus to heal on the Sabbath.

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

The Pharisees have a bad reputation in the Bible. They are known as the men who pray in public where everyone can see them; they are also the men who tithe large amounts of money when people are looking. However, these same men were the people who studied the Bible during every possible moment during the day. They were the people who did try to honor God, and tried to make sure that their actions were upright and just at all times. The problem with the Pharisees is that they seemed hypocritical after Jesus began teaching, because Jesus did not just *know* and *read* the book of law; rather He *was* the law.

- Has there ever been a time when you were called hypocritical from people who don't go to church with you?
- Have you ever unfairly judged a person you know to be a Christian when they make a mistake?
- What is your reputation at school? Work? Church?
- Do you act differently when you know people are watching?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Read Mark 2: 23-28. This passage ends with saying "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." This is Jesus explaining why His actions were not incorrect. God did not design rules pertaining to the Sabbath to trap His people into sinning... God created the Sabbath as a day of rest after a long week so that His people might have a day to look forward to.

- How had the Pharisees misunderstood the purpose of the Sabbath?
- Why did God see it best to rest on the 7th day of creation? Why should we rest 1 day weekly?

Exodus 20: 8-11. In the Old Testament, the Pharisees read the Ten Commandments, and saw that nothing even resembling labor could be done on Sunday. So when they observed Jesus healing on Sunday, they immediately thought He was sinning based on their interpretation of the Law. What they didn't realize was that when Jesus came into the world, *He* became the rest the world needed. No longer were people just to rest on Sundays, but from the time Jesus came we could turn to Him when we needed rest.

Read Hebrews 4: 9-11.

- What rest is the writer of Hebrews referring to: past rest, present rest, future rest?
- How does Jesus bring us rest?

MAKING APPLICATION:

Jesus is the rest the world longs for. Jesus is the only source of peace and comfort, and when He entered into the world He offered that peace 7 days out of the week; not just on Sundays.

- What are ways that we can show God's peace to people at work and school?
- How can we focus on ways of becoming the same person at work as we are at church?

There are many reasons why Christians come across as hypocritical. It is not God who scares people from joining the church and giving God a chance... it is you and I who scare people away.

- How can we change our actions for people to see God and all His glory, instead of seeing Christians and all our flaws?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Jesus came to offer peace and rest for you when you crave it the most. Ask for group members to each share a way they need rest (physically, emotionally, spiritually) and pray for each group member to find peace in Jesus.



Life with Jesus

If Jesus Facebooked...

Week 5: Jesus is telling others why man-made tradition can get you into trouble.

Mark 7:1-13

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Where do you go to find an answer? The source of wisdom and knowledge has changed drastically in the past 10 years. Information is literally at our fingertips. The replacement of printed material with electronic material has not only increased volume but access of information. Libraries are stored or available via the cell phone we carry. People are paid round the clock to be available to answer our burning questions. We truly can be more informed on any subject than ever before.

Have you ever questioned the validity of the information you receive via a book, the television or internet, by word of mouth? Have you ever witnessed the conflict of information from various sources that leave you wondering, "what is true?" Historically, the Word of God was passed from generation to generation by tradition, each previous generation taking responsibility for transferring the will of God to the next. Over time, tradition began to supersede God's will and plan, becoming in conflict with God's true desires for His people. "***Jesus came into the world to become the "word made flesh" so we could see God's desire for us in living lives that please God.***

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

We can often have internal and external conflict when what we expect to happen is different from what actually happens. If the bride doesn't wear white, the kids don't come at Christmas, the graduation doesn't have prayer, the game isn't on tv we can get flustered and draw sides of what's right and what's wrong.

- What is a tradition that is commonly practiced that has become a fact or way life all of itself?
- When have you encountered conflict, either internally or externally, over a tradition?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

Jesus' purpose in coming to earth was to redeem not only man, but the things of God. The traditions that had subverted God's authority were leading people farther from God than closer. **Read Mark 7:1-13.**

- What value is there in the purification and ceremonial washing traditions that had been created?
- What really bothered the Pharisees and teachers of the law besides the disciples eating with unwashed hands?
- How does Jesus response challenge the traditions we often hold to?
- What is a modern day example of the example Jesus gave of the neglecting of family needs?

MAKING APPLICATION:

We must be careful to hold loosely to the traditions of man and hold firmly to the truth of Scripture. God is not honored by our attempts to comply to the ideology of religion or the expectations of those in authority. He has given us the Bible to clearly speak His heart to us. And more than that, He has sent Jesus to clearly exhibit just how to live in a way that pleases Him.

- When have you had to choose between the expectations of others and the way of God?
- How have you been able to see God's plan for your life clearer in the midst of such distractions?
- What expectations do you have of others that might prevent them from seeing and hearing God?
- What is 1 tradition you need to quit practicing that might be preventing you from truly honoring God?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Repentance is a personal and corporate experience. Certainly, sin is an offense to God, but the accountability and support of other believers is helpful in our attempt to please God in the way we live our lives.

- Ask God for forgiveness for a specific way you have dishonored him by holding too closely to tradition more than holding firmly to Scripture or the example of Jesus.
- Pray for God to show you any way you've become a stumbling block for others by creating expectations or traditions that have created a barrier between them and God.



Life with Jesus

If Jesus Facebooked...

Week 6: Jesus is not falling for the trap of not paying taxes

Mark 12:13-17

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

The battle of authority, "who's in charge", has been present from the very beginning of creation. Adam and Eve were caught in a moment of decision: listen to God or the serpent. And since then, we have all found ourselves in similar situations. The dilemma is not always between right and wrong. It more likely brings consternation when the choice is between 2 good things.

Jesus found himself before a group with devious motives who posed a question about paying taxes. It was a contentious and emotional political issue in His day. At one extreme were the zealots who were violently opposed to any homage to Rome; in the middle were the Pharisees who resented the paying of taxes but justified it; and on the other extreme was the Herodians who supported Roman rule. If Jesus said "No, don't pay taxes to Caesar," he would be in violation of the law. If he said, "Yes, pay taxes as required," he would lose popularity. As you can imagine, there was more than the issue of taxes involved in Jesus' heart and mind. ***Jesus provides wisdom and direction to us in learning who resides as Lord of all.***

CONNECTING AS A GROUP:

It is human nature to want to be in control. Everyone enjoys making their own rules and being in charge, especially of their own personhood or possessions. Submission is not a natural human tendency.

- If you could change 1 law in our city, state, or national government, what would it be?
- If you could make 1 rule/policy for your work environment, what would it be?
- Why is it so difficult to follow the rules?

STUDYING GOD'S WORD:

As you read about this encounter Jesus experienced, don't put yourself in His shoes. Picture yourself asking Jesus a question that matters to you about the issue of submission. (ie, "Jesus, why can't I wear what I want to work?" "Jesus, is it wrong to drive 5 miles per hour over the speed limit?" "Jesus, why do I have to respect my parents who have been abusive?") **Read Mark 12:13-17.**

- Why were the Pharisees and Herodians bringing this issue up and trying to trick Jesus?
- What observation did that make about Jesus' character in verse 14? Why is that important?
- What principle(s) can you glean from Jesus' response to answer the question?
- What amazed them about Jesus' teaching/response?

MAKING APPLICATION:

"Jesus was not saying that there are two self-contained and independent spheres (one Caesar's and the other God's), for everything that is Caesar's is ultimately God's. He was rather saying that God's people must give to Caesar the recognition that was due him. They could not enjoy the blessings of Roman rule (like peace, justice, education, roads) and contribute nothing in return. Yet there were limits to what was owed to Caesar. God fearing Jews could not take part in the cult of emperor." (quote from Through the Bible, Through the Year by John Stott, c. 2006, Baker Books).

- When have you found yourself disrespecting someone or something from which you benefit? Why is submission at the heart of that disrespect?
- What parallel to "emperor worship" exists in our day? How have you found yourself "bending your knee?"
- Read 1 Peter 2:13-17. Why is submitting to earthly authority a submission to God's authority? How is it a testimony to others?

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER:

Since submission is not a natural response, we need God's help to create in us humility, patience, perseverance, and integrity. Allow each person in the group to share 1 struggle with authority and have the other members in the group pray:

- Ask God for a change in motivation, focusing on submission to God by submitting to authority here on earth
- Thank God for the benefits you receive from the earthly authority through which He is blessing your life



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For more information and resources visit
<http://www.wrcc.org/connect/smallgroups/index.php>