

SEPTEMBER 19, 2021
LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
THIS IS US WEEK 2 | WE ARE A HOSPITAL
MARK 2:1-17
FALL QUARTER WEEK 2 OF 13

EFCC's definition of a disciple: Someone who is learning to live in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus.

EFCC's discipleship values: Pursuit, Obedience, Journey, Wholeness, Together, Mission.

EFCC's discipleship model: being WITH (upward focus), becoming LIKE (inward focus), doing AS (outward focus).

EFCC's discipleship methodology: focus on what we need to learn, what we need to practice and with whom we need to be in relationship in order to live in the way of Jesus with the heart of Jesus.

For this week, the discipleship value is **mission** because the main point of the message is that we are sent to call those who are sinners, not those who are righteous. This has very big implications as to the kind of church we will be (and since churches are made up of people, it also has very big implications as to the kind of people we will be). We are called to be a hospital and not a country club. We are called to minister to the sinner and not cater to the righteous. We are called to be a people and a place where sinners will want to come when they need to be ministered to. We don't want to be like a hospital that everyone avoids because it has a bad reputation for patient care and bedside manner. We want to be a church with an amazing reputation where people know they will encounter grace and truth in the person of Jesus as He ministers to them through us and through His Spirit. Since we are a spiritual hospital, so to speak, the only question we really have to wrestle with is, "What kind will we be?" This message is God's way of teaching us what He wants from/for us.

In the being **WITH**, becoming **LIKE** and doing **AS** paradigm, this week's message focuses us on **becoming like** (which is an inward focus). We will be challenged to evaluate how we're doing at having the character of Christ when it comes to our attitudes and approach to sinners who need Him. Do we run to them so we might introduce them to Jesus? Or do we run from them, afraid they might make us unclean? Do we show them the grace and mercy God has shown us in Christ, or do we judge them or make them feel judged? Do we believe the Great Physician can heal them, or do we write them off? There are lots of questions to wrestle with as we take a look at our own hearts and let the Holy Spirit lead us in an internal assessment (Psalm 139:23-24).

Renewed by Grace

1. What memory still makes you laugh out loud?

I have to think more about this!

Equipped as Disciples

2. From verses 1-12, what are *your* observations concerning

- **The people who are in the room who are listening to Jesus?**
- **The four friends and what they do?**

- **How Jesus first responds, and then how He later responds?**
- **Where do you find yourself in this part of the story? Why?**

For this question you might think about gathering from the group three or four observations around each of the sub-questions. I think the fourth sub-question is the most important one because it is where we engage in the internal assessment about which I wrote above.

I'd love it if your group can dig in a bit to discuss where they find themselves in this account. My encouragement to you is to ask "Why?" three or four times after a person's initial response. You might not have time to go through this with everyone in the group. When the person responds to, "Where do you find yourself in this part of the story?" you come back with, "Why?" When they respond to that, you come again with, "Why?" When they respond to that, you come back again with, "Why?" By the third or fourth, "Why?" you're getting to some pretty deep stuff. If you were to go to a level five "Why?" you would find yourself most likely at the heart of the matter. (By the way, asking "Why?" is the best follow up question you can pose in any conversation!)

If it's helpful, I will provide a few of my observations to the sub-questions.

- **The people who are in the room who are listening to Jesus?**
They were hungry for the word (vs. 2)
It doesn't appear anybody offered to move or create space for the paralytic (vss. 3-4)
It doesn't appear anyone helped the paralytic's pallet as it was lowered from the roof (vs. 4)
There were also religious leaders there. And they criticized Him for blaspheming by forgiving sins (vss. 6-7)
What else do you see?
- **The four friends and what they do?**
They went out of their way to help their friend (vss. 3-4)
They believed Jesus could heal their friend (vs. 5)
They did something that looked pretty dumb, perhaps (vs. 4)
Could it be that it was their faith that caused their friend's sins to be forgiven and his body to be healed? (vs. 5) (This is the conclusion one could reach if one only read this verse or only heard this account from the Bible, depending on who "they" is, of course.)
But what role does our faith play in other's lives? Something to at least ponder
What else do you see?
- **How Jesus first responds, and then how He later responds?**
Jesus seems to think nothing of the fact that some random paralytic is being lowered while He is teaching (vs. 5)
We know He first forgives the man's sins, then heals his paralysis (vss. 5, 11)
While He knows the man's presenting need, He chooses to heal the man's real need first (vs. 5). There are a number of interesting things here, which you should probably not chase after! But, the man does not ask for forgiveness. In fact, nobody asks for forgiveness. But Jesus gives it in response to "their" faith.
Jesus prioritizes spiritual needs over physical needs. But He still addresses physical needs.

What else do you see?

- **Where do you find yourself in this part of the story? Why?**

I see myself sitting at Jesus' feet and listening to Him teach. Then I see myself being willing to give up my seat to make room for someone else who might need to hear Him more than me. But I probably walked by a few paralytics on my way into the meeting and never thought twice about helping them. And if I had a paralytic friend, I'm not sure I would have gone to the extremes of digging a hole in a roof to get him in front of Jesus. I might have just said, "Well, the room is full so it doesn't seem to be in God's plan for you to get time with Him." I'm also evaluating how much faith I would have had.

What about you?

3. From verses 13-17, what are *your* observations concerning

- **The feelings of the Pharisees in verse 16?**
- **The response of Jesus in verse 17?**
- **Where do you find yourself in this part of the story?**

Let's approach this question in the exact same manner we did the previous one.

- **The feelings of the Pharisees in verse 16?**

They were self-righteous

They did not understand why Jesus came in the first place. He had told them (Luke 4:14ff) but they didn't get it

They did not have compassion for sinners (because they were self-righteous)

They went to His disciples rather than to Him (vs. 18). But that ends up backfiring.

What else do you see?

- **The response of Jesus in verse 17?**

Jesus overhears what they are saying. I wonder if they purposefully said it loud enough for Him to hear? Interesting thing to consider (vs. 17)

Jesus teaches, again, why He came - to call sinners and not righteous people

Jesus explains why He is spending time with sinners. This is His mission

What's interesting is we know no one is righteous outside of union with Christ by faith.

He has come to call those who know they need Him and will leave alone those who do not think they need Him (even though they desperately do). In reality, all are sick, but not all realize it. He will call those who know their situation

I wonder what Jesus' response to the scribes of the Pharisees did to their sense of need?

Did it cement self-righteousness in them? Did it make some of them think?

What else do you see?

- **Where do you find yourself in this part of the story?**

Would you have been more likely to be Jesus in this account, or the scribes of the Pharisees? When sinners and tax collectors show up at EFCC are you pleased to see them? Or do you wish they would attend church somewhere else? Do you spend time with sinners and tax collectors? And if you don't, do you at least have a desire to?

I love it that Jesus is criticized for spending time with sinners and tax collectors and I

would like to be the recipient of that kind of criticism as well. I have some work to do!

- 4. How well do you believe EFCC does at being a hospital? Why? What has been your experience of what we do well and of what we don't do well?**

I'm going to leave my comments out and let your group bat this around.

Sent in Love

- 5. What is one practical thing you can do to help us get better at being a hospital?**

What is one thing that can be your response to the "I will..." challenge of the message?

Next week I am going to build in time at the beginning of your groups' time for people to share about how it went when they did their "I will" statement. This is a part of the process of making some micro-shifts to the groups to start driving toward application and accountability in the groups where it might be lacking. It will probably take us some time to get to where we want to be, but we will get there. Your modeling will be very important!