



Group Discussion Guide

With Jesus In My Sinning

Sunday, September 18, 2011

Read

Read aloud through the story of the Samaritan Woman found in John 4:1-42. Go around the circle in the group with each person reading a few verses until you're done.

Discuss

As you ponder this story, what do you think were some of the feelings this woman experienced?

Close your eyes and picture yourself in the story... watch as Jesus interacts with this woman... what does Jesus' face look like as he confronts her sin? Is he stern? Kind? Passive? Compassionate? Accusing? Frowning? Smiling? What does your picture of Jesus tell you about your assumptions on how Jesus views your own sin? What do you think God is really like when He finds us in our sin?

Theologian Miroslav Volf wrote that there are four movements to God's forgiveness:

1. The act must be recognized and confessed before Him as sin and wrong.
2. The act must be condemned, identified as outside the boundaries of God's plan for our lives.
3. God forgives us completely.
4. Then he hides the sin away, never to bring it up again.

Why is confession of sin important for a Christian? Is it hard or easy to do? Why? Is it easy or hard to accept God's forgiveness? Where are you most likely to get hung up in the 4-step process above?

Many Christians have one of two distorted views of forgiveness:

Legalistic

1. The act must be confessed shamefully.
2. The act must be condemned, as well as the person committing that act.
3. The act will be forgiven by God, but conditionally.
4. The act must be exposed before others as a way of modifying the person's behavior.

Cavalier

1. The act is rationalized as having "reasons" for doing so.
2. The act is excused as not big deal.
3. Cheap grace is applied.
4. The act is whitewashed so not one will see it.

Did you experience one of these distorted views growing up? Which one are you more likely to fall into today? Where do you sense Jesus wants to move you in order to experience more of his real grace and forgiveness?

Pray

Reserve at least the last 15 minutes of group time to pray for the things that came up in your discussion and any other prayer needs.

Here's some background information on John 4:1-42:

Why did Jesus leave Judea? Where are Samaria & Sychar? Who are Jacob & Joseph? (John 4:1-5)

Because His ministry was surpassing John's ministry, He knew that the Pharisees soon would be after Him. They couldn't accept Jesus' teaching or His condemnation of their hypocrisy, and they sought to kill Him with increasing intensity. Jesus went to Samaria, the region in the middle of Israel, between Judea to the south and Galilee to the north, and Sychar was a city in Samaria about 30 miles north of Jerusalem. Jacob & Joseph are the grandson and the great-grandson of Abraham, whom God had chosen to found the Hebrew nation. Genesis 12-25 speak of what God did with Abraham, and chapters 25 to the end of Genesis deal with Jacob & Joseph.

Why was Jesus "wearied" (John 4:6)?

It was about "the sixth hour," six hours from sunrise, or about noon. Jesus probably had been walking all morning and the sun was hot at its zenith.

Why did "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans" (John 4:9)?

The 12 tribes of Jews who settled in Israel eventually split into the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. When the Northern Kingdom was conquered in 722 BC and exiled to Assyria, Sargon of Assyria repopulated the Northern Kingdom region with people from other countries that he had conquered, who intermarried with the Jews left behind. Rejected as an impure mixed race by the Jews in the South, the Northern Jews - now called "Samaritans" - set up their own temple and religious services on Mount Gerizim, about 10 miles west of Sychar.

What is the "living water" (John 4:10) that Jesus is talking about?

John 4:14 says that living water is what leads to "everlasting life," so Jesus is talking about the source of life in the kingdom of God, the good news about forgiveness and new life that comes from himself.

After calling Jesus a prophet, why does the woman suddenly bring up a theological issue in John 4:20?

She may have been trying to divert the discussion away from her exposed sins.

According to Jesus, what is the proper place for worshipping God?

"True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth," (John 4:23) not in a particular geographical place.

What does Jesus mean by salvation being "of the Jews" in John 4:22?

The word translated "of" more precisely means, "from" or "out of." Jesus is saying that the messiah will arise from the Jewish people.

Why might the people in the woman's town have been intrigued by what she had to say?

Since she was on her sixth "husband" (John 4:18), she may have had a reputation around town, and for her to declare, "He told me all that I ever did" (John 4:29) may have perked some ears.

What does Jesus mean by, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'?"

There are two planting seasons per year and four months is the time between planting and harvest. Jesus is telling them not to wait around, for the fields are "ripe for harvest!" (John 4:35)

Why or when did "many more" believe in Jesus?

They believed after having hearing "for themselves" (John 4:42).

The background information above was adapted from JustBible.net.

"Distorted views of forgiveness" adapted from The Dad Connection, Terry Wardle.