

Let's Go Group Studies

Leader's Notes

1. We're providing this material to you to remove some of the stress and frustration of developing a plan to lead a specific group study. It isn't meant to replace your individual preparation to lead. Our hope is that you would use it as a guide to your engagement with the text and the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead you as you help your study's participants to have their own relevant encounter with scripture and the Holy Spirit.
2. This plan isn't meant to constrain you to lead in any specific way. **Please do modify it to better meet the needs of your group and to honor your gifting and authentic style.** For example, when and how you pray and share prayer needs should be in a rhythm that is good for your group as long as you are praying as a group. For another, who and how scripture is read should fit your group and its needs as long as it is read somehow.
3. **Be authentic.** If you find yourself saying "They are asking" as in, 'I didn't write this question and I don't really understand why it is being asked.' Don't ask it. Ask something else. It is okay not to understand everything. No one understands everything. If you don't believe in what you're saying, why should anyone else believe it? One way to turn this into a positive is to admit to the group that you are struggling with figuring out a particular bit and allow someone else to contribute their God-given wisdom.
4. Some questions, especially earlier in the study, aren't meant to be a mile deep or transformative. These questions are intended to prompt the participants to notice what is there. They give the participants a way to begin to care about the specific words on the page and to begin to discuss the relevance of the scripture to their needs.
5. Portions of the plan in quotes are meant to be spoken out loud to the group as in, "Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?" You don't have to repeat the question or statement exactly as it appears. Restate it in a way that feels comfortable and natural for you.
6. Portions of the plan in *italics* are meant to be notes to you that you can use as prompts in aiding group discussion and aren't intended to be read verbatim to the group. They may not be the definitive answer but should be a good possible answer. As part of your preparation, please add to and edit the notes to fit where you intend to lead the discussion.
7. A **Follow up question** helps participants open up a little more and look a little deeper and is meant to be asked after there has been some discussion of the prior question.
8. The last page is the participant handout.
9. Please remember that our focus, purpose and practice is to **Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples.**

Let's Go- The One Greater Than Religion

- 1) Scripture: Mark 7:1-23; Is 29:13
 - A. Parallel accounts- Mt 15:1-20
- 2) Objective: After studying the listed scripture and participating in the discussion, each person should be able to identify if they have any practices or faith traditions in their lives that they honor above God's will or instruction.
- 3) Resources: Book of Mark, Grassmick. The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Walvoord & Zuck,
- 4) Preparation:
 - A. Pray for guidance
 - B. Review Leader's Notes and read entire lesson plan
- 5) Prayer requests & Open in prayer
- 6) Intro:
 - A. "Last time I asked you to commit to asking the Holy Spirit each day this past week to work in your heart to show you what God would have you believe about the thing with which you have struggled to believe. Would anyone be willing to share if they were able to do that and tell us how you feel about the results?" *If you closed last time's study with a different question or application, substitute your closing for this one.*
 - B. Tonight, we are studying a passage where once again the Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus to find fault with his teaching and practices. In response, Jesus forcefully calls them hypocrites for holding the practice of declaring some wealth Corban (wealth dedicated to God and pious acts for God) and thus making it unavailable to support their needy parents over God's clear direction that needy parents are to be honored and supported. In the process Jesus teaches all of us that it isn't external defilement that separates us from God. It is the evil in our hearts that becomes the sinful actions of our lives that defile us before God.
 - C. When we are done, each of us should be able to identify if we have any practices or faith traditions in our lives that we honor above God's will or instruction."
- 7) The study
 - A. Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 7:1-5
 - B. Ask "What does the first thing they asked Jesus about tell you about the Pharisees and their intentions?"

- i) *Might have been looking for something to criticize, maybe even had that one ready before they came.*
- ii) *Might have been the most important question from their perspective.*
- iii) *Shows what is in their hearts.*
- iv) *The ritual washing regulations were observed by the Pharisees and all the Jews (a generalization depicting their custom) as part of the tradition of the elders which they followed scrupulously. These interpretations, designed to regulate every aspect of Jewish life, were considered as binding as the written Law and were passed on to each generation by faithful Law teachers (scribes). Later, in the third century A.D., the oral tradition was collected and codified in the Mishnah which, in turn, provided the foundation for and structure of the Talmud. (from Bible Knowledge Commentary)*

C. Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 7:6-15 (See also Is 29:13)

- i) *Many modern Bible translations omit verse 16 because it isn't found in early manuscripts and seems to have been added later. Some translations bracket verse 16 and note that same issue. The KJV includes it but didn't have the benefit of some of the earlier manuscripts. KJV derivative translations thus include it.*
- ii) *This is verse 16 ["If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."] NASU. It appears repeatedly elsewhere in scripture. There is no conspiracy to hide secret knowledge.*

D. Ask everyone to complete question 1 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

- i) "What two sources of religious authority does Jesus describe in verses 6 through 13?"

(1) *God's law and tradition. Summarized by verses 8 and 13*

E. Follow-up question. "How would you describe what this hypocrisy Jesus speaks of does to the worship of the hypocrite?"

- i) *The 'hypocrite' is an actor playing a character. Greek actors wore a mask.*
- ii) *It is "in vain."*
- iii) *Makes it a farce.*
- iv) *The worship may be any pious act. Any good thing one might do for God is in vain if one's heart does not honor God.*

F. Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 7:17-23

G. Ask everyone to complete question 2 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "What does Jesus say is the source of defilement (that which separates us from God) in a man?"

(1) *Verse 20. That which comes from the heart*

H. Ask everyone to complete question 3 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "Can you think of any of your religious traditions, past or present, of which you aren't completely convinced honor God's heart and will?" *Ideally, these answers come from the participants. Whether they get them from the study, the Sunday sermon or elsewhere, the best thing that can happen here is they are verbalized by the participants. If they struggle to answer...*

(1) *These can be simple practices in observance of holidays. Complex issues of baptism, marriage & divorce, giving or prayer.*

(2) *This shouldn't be a time of finding fault with someone else's traditions. This is a time for reinforcing the practice of examining our hearts and actions.*

I. Follow-up question. "What do you think motivates any of us to value tradition over God's teaching and will?"

i) *The human spirit craves acceptance and will rationalize a lot to achieve it.*

ii) *Nostalgia feels good.*

iii) *It is usually easier to accept what the expert in front of us says than to seek God's truth.*

iv) *God's way can be hard. It cuts across the grain of what culture wants.*

J. Ask everyone to complete question 4 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "If you haven't done so already, will you ask the Holy Spirit to convict your heart, set you free from traditions that don't honor God and to lead you into all truth regarding this tradition you have been serving?"

8) Summary:

A. Encourage your group members to apply the ideas or principles they developed from question 4. Plan on asking them next week about the results.

B. Close in prayer

The One Greater Than Religion

Mark 7:1-23

1) What two sources of religious authority does Jesus describe in verses 6 through 13?

2) What does Jesus say is the source of defilement (that which separates us from God) in a man?

3) Can you think of any of your religious traditions, past or present, of which you aren't completely convinced honor God's heart and will?

4) If you haven't done so already, will you ask the Holy Spirit to convict your heart, set you free from traditions that don't honor God and to lead you into all truth regarding this tradition you have been serving?

For next time... Read Mark 7:24-37