

life group study guide

February 15, 2015

The King: How Do I Approach God?

"I'm finding prayer to be less about getting what I want, and more about becoming content with whatever God is doing."

The Big Idea: How do you approach God? How do you connect with Him? Most of us can think of two options. There is the ancient understand: God is a bloodthirsty tyrant who needs to be constantly appeased by good behavior, if not outright sacrifice. And there's the modern understanding of God: He's a spiritual force we can access anytime we want, no questions asked. But Mark tells us a story, showing us that approaching God might mean something else entirely.

Q: Growing up, what was your understanding of how you connect with God?

Q: How did you make Him happy? What did appeasing God look like in your faith background?

Continued: As we dig into this text, we see a Jesus that is quite foreign to us in a post-Christian culture of America. We are about to see that Jesus is very concerned with people's lives, but He is more concerned with getting what they need and not what they want.

Q: What do you think Matt means by the "post-Christian culture of America?"

Q: Do you think of America as "post-Christian?"

READ: Mark 7:24-29

Q: It seems out of character for Jesus to turn away a woman looking for help. Why do you think He responded to her this way?

Q: Why did Jesus call her response a "good answer?" What did He see in her that he liked most?

READ: Mark 7:30-37

Q: Tyre and Sidon were pagan Roman cities, yet history tells us there was a great spiritual hunger there. Why do you think Jesus was able to perform greater miracles in these areas (Mt. 11:21-24) than He was in more traditionally religious communities?

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Q: When Jesus healed the deaf man, why do you think He led him away from the crowd? Why does He tell the crowd not to share these stories with others?

"Faith is an action word, a verb, that means receiving, depending upon, needing. It has the idea of weakness in it, of neediness, of constantly going to Christ."

–Jack Miller

READ: Isaiah 35:4-6

Q: What adjectives describe those God has come to save and heal?

Q: In the passages we read from Mark above, what seems to be the common thread in all those who were healed by Jesus? How did they approach Him? What one word might describe their demeanor?

"The gospel does not say, 'the good are in and the bad are out,' nor 'the open-minded are in and the judgmental are out.' The gospel says the humble are in and the proud are out. The gospel says the people who know they're not better, not more open-minded, not more moral than anyone else, are in, and the people who think they're on the right side of the divide are most in danger."

–Tim Keller (Jesus the King)

Q: How does moralism say we approach God? Can you think of an example?

Q: How does open-mindedness and enlightenment say connect with God? Can you think of an example?

Q: How does the Gospel say we connect with God?

One of the greatest mistakes I make in reading Scripture is that when I see references to the poor, the needy, the outcast, the barren, the broken, the destitute, the cast out, the blind, the deaf, the lame, the weak, the sinful – I never envision myself – I always envision "others." In this, I do myself (and God) a great disservice.

Q: Do you think a lack of connection with God ever correlates to misunderstanding how much we truly need Him?

Q: "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). Could lack of faith stem from ignorance of just how weak and desperate and needy we really are? Discuss.

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