

Gathering Guide

for Communities and Friends
Beyond the Bio: "It's Personal, But Never Private", 09/28/19

The Big Idea

Like it or not, God designed for community to be at the very core of our being. From God's declaration to Adam at creation that it is not good that he is alone, to Jesus' words that "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them," or the very nature of God himself in the Trinity, community is a central part of who we are in God. And while sin and sickness would threaten that design, causing division and isolation, God's healing mends both individuals and communities. God's work in us is personal but never private, and so the depths of knowing God beyond "the biography" reach not only within us but also around us.

Where we are in the Bible

Luke 5:12-16 contributes to the evangelistic retelling of Jesus' story, much like in the other Gospels, aiming to validate Jesus' divine power. This is particularly significant in light of Jesus' rejection at his hometown of Nazareth in chapter 4. In his confrontation with the Nazarenes Jesus mentions Naaman the Syrian (4:27), a man stricken with leprosy but healed by Elisha the prophet. Jesus mentions this tale to point out that Naaman was God's exception because –like him –Elisha was not accepted in his hometown. Now outside of his hometown and displaying the power of God in many ways, Jesus was approached by a man with leprosy.

Finding a bit of ourselves

- In the first Century, lepers were the ultimate outcasts. Spend some time reflecting or discussing the relationship between sickness and isolation. Perhaps you can recall the AIDS epidemic in the 80's as a parallel.
- Is there a time when you felt the darkness of loneliness and isolation? Describe what that was like.
- In this story, it was desperation that brought the leper to Jesus. We often see desperation in a negative light, but desperation (or extreme dependence) in the Christian faith is a good thing. Reflect on or discuss this paradox.

Other scriptures to consider

Leviticus 13:1-3; 14:2-57
Instructions for dealing with leprosy

2 Kings 5
The story of Naaman

Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45
This same story in the other Gospels

1 Corinthians 12:12-27
The Body of Christ

Ephesians 4:1-16
Instructions on being the Body

Where do we go from here?

- Reflect or discuss the significance of Jesus reaching out to touch this leper. What did it mean for the leper? What does it say about how Jesus ministers to us?
- Jesus orders the leper to show himself to the priest (see Lev. 13:1-3). What is the significance of Jesus recognizing this important step towards the leper reuniting with society?
- It can be said that "there are no lone ranger Christians," and yet there are plenty of ways for each of us to practice faith in isolation. Reflect or discuss the claim that our faith is personal but not private. In what ways are we guilty for privatizing our faith? What are the reasons (hurt, introverted, etc.) for doing so?
- Reflect or discuss some of the ways we grow in the presence of community that cannot be offered to us by ourselves. What does the Church offer us that no other entity can offer? Reflect on or share some of the times when God ministered to you through the presence of God's people.
- What is one thing you can do this week to contribute to the Body of Christ (Eph. 4)?

Prayer focus

Intercession is a prayer that focuses on the needs of others. Spend some time interceding for your church and its members:

- Those in need of physical healing
- Those feeling isolated
- Those struggling in their relationship with God



friends church
Willoughby Hills