

## Lesson 2: Why Did Jesus Come?

Key Concept: Why did Jesus come?      Answer: To save those in need  
Bible Study: Mark 5-8

### Bible Study

**Coaching Point:** Download the YouVersion Bible app on your phone and help your friend do so. I have found that people don't feel quite as weird reading the Bible on their phone in a restaurant.

Recap: Last week we asked, “**Who was Jesus?**” Whatever answer we come up with, it has to take into account the evidence in Mark's Gospel - evidence that suggests He is in fact God. He amazed crowds with His teaching, cured diseases, raised the dead, calmed a storm, and even forgave sins. In short, Mark's gospel is crystal clear on this point: Jesus was God.

Now we turn our attention to another vital question: “**Why did Jesus come?**” Mark's answer, in chapters 5-8, is simple—**Jesus came to save people in need.** Yet, in the book of Mark, we find out quickly that there are 2 groups of people (the religious and the irreligious) that feel like they really have no need to be saved by Jesus. Religious people are people who keep all the rules and irreligious people are ones that break all the rules. Both end up saying to Jesus, in their own way, “Thanks, but no thanks. We really don't need you.” Let's consider both of these, and begin by thinking about religious people.

**Coaching Pt:** Give them time to ask questions from the last week or if anything jumped out from the reading. In my experience, people often don't have questions at the beginning because it takes a little while for them to get warmed up.

#### **(1) Religious People (keep all the rules)**

In the book of Mark, you will see that there is one group that Jesus consistently rebukes and that is the religious people (i.e. the Pharisees, the scribes, and the teachers of the law). Now why do you think that is? It is because religious people have an us/them mentality. They're the ones who think they have it all together, unlike *those* people over there—those “*Sinners.*” Therefore, religious people feel like they have no need to be saved by Jesus because they are doing just fine by themselves.

**Coaching Point:** Feel free to use this example below. You may also choose to make up a similar example from your own life.

Religious people are like my son Ford when he was little. When Ford was 4, he was convinced he could swim. He was wrong. So when we went to the pool at the beginning of the summer he said, “Dad, I don’t want to wear my floaties. I want to swim without them. I don’t need them.” I offered him help, pleaded with him to wear the floaties, but he confidently (and wrongly) proclaimed, “I don’t need floaties, Dad. I’m good.” Despite Jesus’ pleadings, religious people in the book of Mark say the same thing to Jesus, “We’re all good, Jesus. No thanks. I’m a good person. I go to church. I pray and give money to the church.”

Let’s read 2 stories that demonstrate this.

**Coaching Point: To make this interactive, ask them what they think is the point of this story.**

**READ Mark 2:13-17**

In this story, we meet the Pharisees in verse 16. Pharisees were often middle class businessmen who were elders or leaders in the church. They were respected, moral people that were thought to be the best the town had to offer. Some were teachers of the law (as we see in verse 16) and others simply took the teaching that came from the teachers of the law and developed a list of do’s and don’ts that became known as the “tradition of the elders” (Mark 7:3). Anyone not following this list was labeled a “sinner” and was frowned upon by the Pharisees.

This led to the Pharisees developing an us/them mentality where they were the good guys and everyone else was the bad guys. They had a particular disdain for tax collectors because they were seen as both traitors and swindlers. Tax collectors had not only gone over to the dark side and sided with the occupying enemy of Rome to collect their taxes, but they also were greedy cheaters who gouged the Jewish people with exorbitant fees on top of the Roman tax rate to become wealthy. Therefore, in the mind of the Pharisees, the tax collectors were the moral dregs of society, the bottom of the barrel.

This is why they are so miffed when Jesus goes to Levi, a tax collector, and calls him as one of His disciples, and even worse, goes to his house for a party with all the tax collectors and other misfits (i.e. “sinners”). In their minds, Jesus spends all of his time with the wrong people. Why? Because they were the people who knew that they needed Jesus. That is why Jesus says in verse 17, *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Therefore, the qualification for Jesus isn’t, “Are you good enough?” Rather, the qualification is, “Are you honest about yourself? Can you admit that you aren’t what you need to be and that you need help?” Jesus came for people who know that they are broken and need to be made whole. The Pharisees missed this because they thought they already had their act together.

Let's read another passage that illustrates this same principle in Mark 7.

**Read Mark 7: 1-7, 20-23.**

**Coaching Point:** To make this interactive, ask them what they think is the point of this story.

In this passage, the Pharisees and teachers of the law once again appear. In verse 3, we see that they have developed a tradition of the elders (remember, this is their list, not God's list) that included a certain way to wash your hands and even dishware. Anyone not washing properly was considered "unclean" (note that Mark puts quotes around this word in the same way he did "sinners," almost as if we would put air quotes around something if we were telling a story to indicate that it *really* wasn't true). The disciples of Jesus didn't follow the Pharisees rules for washing and the Pharisees didn't like it one bit so they questioned Jesus about it and Jesus says, "*Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites...These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me*" (verse 6).

Jesus says, "You're a bunch of hypocrites. You pay lip service to God, but your hearts are far from God. You follow all the rules, but your heart is a million miles from Him. It is all empty ritual with you. All form, no substance. You may have the external appearance of being a good person and everyone may think you are a good person, but the problem is that your heart is totally disconnected from God."

Just so His disciples didn't miss the point of this encounter with the Pharisees, Jesus pulled His disciples aside and said, "*What comes out of a man is what makes him 'unclean.'* 21 *For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, 22 greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'*"

The problem, according to Jesus, is the heart. The problem isn't hanging around with the wrong crowd or not washing properly. You don't catch sin like you catch a cold. No, sin is symptom of a diseased heart. And, unfortunately, it wasn't just the Pharisees who had a diseased heart, but rather, this is a problem that all of us share "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Rms. 3:23). Why? Because all of us have a heart that is corrupt and therefore leads us into sin.

**Alexander Solzhenitsyn** came to understand the importance of this reality—that evil really is in every human heart, not in just some identifiable people (like tax collectors or people that don't wash their hands). Solzhenitsyn served in the Soviet Army and was highly decorated. Then, he began to doubt the moral underpinnings of the regime. He was imprisoned in Russia for writing derogatory remarks about the Stalinist regime and he served in a labor camp for 11 years where he was beaten, interrogated, and nearly killed. During his imprisonment, Dr. Boris Kornfeld treated him inside the camp. The two became friends, and Dr. Kornfeld confided in him one night that he had just become a Christian. The next morning Solzhenitsyn woke up

and his friend had been beaten to death with a mallet. Listen to his reflections, “*I lay there a long time in that recovery room from which Kornfeld had gone forth to his death, and all alone during sleepless nights I pondered with astonishment my own life and the turns it had taken. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart, and through all human hearts.*”

Solzhenitsyn realized that the regime he was under had been feeding him lies. They were telling him that evil was found in those who opposed the Soviets and Stalinism. But when Solzhenitsyn saw such evil perpetrated against innocent people like Kornfeld he knew that evil wasn't limited to a nation or political party or class of people—it was found in every human heart—in Russians, Germans, Americans and beyond. And he famously wrote that the line between good and evil runs right through every human heart.

Why do we find it hard to do the right thing? Why is it so difficult to keep good relationships healthy? Why do we hurt the people we love the most? Why can't we automatically love each other? Because we've all got a heart problem. Out of our hearts come all these bad things. Those things are what make us unclean. That's where the fits of rage, jealousy, selfish ambition and envy all come from.

Remember last week how we talked about the definition of sin. We defined sin as building your life around anything other than God. The religious leaders here centered their life around being good. And their goodness was the very thing that kept them from God because it led them to feel morally superior than everyone else, puffing themselves up with pride and causing them to look down on everyone else.

**Coaching Point: Can you identify with the religious people in our story? Do you struggle with acting like the Pharisees at times? Have religious people (like the Pharisees) shaped your spiritual journey?**

Lest we think too highly of ourselves like the religious leaders, here is a helpful thought experiment to get our minds around who we really are and the diseased heart problem that each one of us has. Imagine for a moment that this room is a public art gallery, and plastered all over the walls is a record of your life. Every day is on the walls. Every single day. It is a complete and true account not only of everything you've ever said and done, but also of everything of you've ever thought. Even your motives are revealed for everyone to see.

Now I'm sure there would be lots to celebrate on those walls: loving relationships, real achievements, acts of kindness, moments of generosity and selflessness, perhaps a flourishing career. But there would also be thousands of things that we'd want to keep out of the public gaze. Which bit of the wall would you most want to cover up? Which day? Maybe it's something nobody knows - not even your closest friend or your spouse.

And, it is not just the things we've said and done that are a problem. The things we should have done and the people we should have helped are up on the walls as well. Everything is exposed for everyone to see, even the good things for all the wrong reasons. If my life was on the walls, it would be a nightmare. I wouldn't be able to stay in the room, I'd be so ashamed. Could you - if you're being honest?

If you get this, then you will do as Jesus does and simply refuse to villainize anyone or any group. If you are a democrat, you won't villainize the Republicans, and if you are a Republican, you won't villainize the Democrats. If you are a homosexual, you won't villainize the heterosexuals, and if you are a heterosexual, you won't villainize the homosexuals. If you are a conservative, you won't villainize the liberals, and if you are a liberal, you won't villainize the conservatives. Why? Because you realize that the problem of evil isn't isolated to a particular sub-set of the human race. You know it has infected the whole of the human race, including you. And that leads to humility, not pride.

## **(2) Irreligious People (break all the rules)**

Now, the other group of people that don't think they need to be saved are irreligious people. These are people who aren't concerned at all with keeping all the rules. Instead, they get a whole lot of pleasure from breaking all the rules. An irreligious person says, "No one is going to tell me how to live. I'm the king of my world and I call the shots."

A good example of a person like this is King Herod. Look with me at chapter 6:14-29. Here you have a guy who enjoyed living the way he wanted to live, as did the woman that he was sleeping with named Herodias. Herodias was formerly married to her half-uncle, Herod Phillip, but she left him for the adulterous, incestuous relationship with Herod Phillip's half brother (known as Herod Antipas or simply King Herod in our text). John the Baptist called them on it and they didn't like it, so they had him killed. This is how irreligious people act. They don't repent (i.e. turn from their sin and turn to God in faith to change) when they are confronted with their sin, they just get angry.

There is actually a very popular movie that repeats a quote from a poem that captures this mentality. The film is *Invictus*, and the line that Morgan Freeman repeats in the film several times is this, "I am the master of my fate, the captain of my soul." That is Herodias' motto—no one will tell me how to live. It is up to me to determine what is right and wrong. I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.

There are 2 types of people who do this in our world today:

### **(1) Unconsciously Irreligious People: Hedonistic**

Those who are unconsciously irreligious are those who haven't put a great deal of thought behind religious issues. In fact, they would rather not think about all the God stuff because it just leads to arguments. They typically adhere to the motto that there are 2 subjects that are off limits: politics and religion. And they really like the song by Dave Matthews, "Eat, Drink, and Be Merry," for tomorrow we die. So they

pursue a hedonistic lifestyle, pursuing whatever can deliver the most pleasure at the moment. If it feels good, do it. Carpe diem.

In San Diego, this is the PB crowd that rocks the bar scene. That's not entirely true. You can find them in the Gaslamp District most any night and, actually, just about any neighborhood in San Diego.

**(2) Consciously Irreligious People: Philosophical Skeptics**

These are people who are, typically, much more thoughtful. They have put lots of time and energy and effort into the question of the existence of God. They either hold to an atheistic or agnostic viewpoint based on their study. We have numerous examples of this—Richard Dawkins and Sam Harris just to name a few.

**Coaching Point: Can you identify with the irreligious people in our story? Have irreligious people shaped your spiritual journey?**

## Discussion Questions:

1. Describe the 2 types of people that miss out on the reason that Jesus came.
2. Would you say you are more of the religious type or the irreligious type or have you experienced both in your journey? Discuss why.
3. Was your home growing up more religious or irreligious?
4. Read Mark 2: 13-17. Discuss the one qualification for Jesus.
5. Read Mark 7: 1-23. What is the point of the story?
6. How does Solzhenitsyn capture the point of Mark 7: 1-23?
7. Read Mark 6: 14-29. Discuss Herod's irreligion.

1. **Recap: Who Was Jesus? God.**
  - a. Demonstrated that He was God through the way he taught, healed sick, raised dead, had power over nature, forgave sins
  - b. Any questions from last week?
2. **Why Did Jesus Come? To Save People in Need.**
  - a. **2 Categories of People who don't need Him**
    - i. **Religious People (keep all the rules)**
      1. Floaties story
      2. Mark 2: 13-17 (pg 991)
        - a. Verse 17
      3. Mark 7: 1-7, 20-23
        - a. Verses 6-7—Heart
        - b. Verses 20-23; Romans 3:23
        - c. Solzhenitsyn: Served in Soviet army, began to doubt Stalinist regime, 11 years in labor camp beaten. *“I lay there a long time in that recovery room from which Kornfeld had gone forth to his death, and all alone during sleepless nights I pondered with astonishment my own life and the turns it had taken. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either, but right through every human heart, and through all human hearts.*
          - d. Can you identify? Have Pharisees shaped you in your journey?
      4. How can we avoid ending up in same place?
        - a. Thought Experiment to help avoid
        - b. Result: (1) Don't villainize, (2) Humility
    - ii. **Irreligious (break all the rules)**
      1. Mark 6: 14-29--996 (adulterous, incestuous relationship)
        - a. Invictus quote
      2. In our world today...
        - a. Unconsciously irreligious: Hedonistic
        - b. Consciously irreligious: Philosophical (Dawkins)
        - c. Can you identify? Shaped your journey?