

Home Group notes for the week following 9th September 2018

LOVING INCLUSIVELY

AS WE GATHER

Immediately after teaching the distinction between what makes people clean or unclean, Jesus and His disciples left Israel and travelled into Gentile territory. This is the only recorded instance of Jesus actually leaving His own country. He was teaching His disciples, by His example, that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles – all are sinners and need a saviour.

READING SCRIPTURE **Mark 7:24-37 James 2:1-10 + 14-17**

[optional readings Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9 + 22-23 Psalm 125]

THINKING TOGETHER

Originally Tyre and Sidon had been part of the land of Israel, but the Israelites had never been able to conquer these two strong cities. Now Jesus travelled to these two wicked and materialistic Phoenician port cities, and then on down into the Decapolis – a region of 10 Gentile cities.

Why did Jesus feel the need to temporarily escape from His own country? Discuss (Mark 7:24)

Why did Jesus take His ministry of love and healing into these territories? Discuss Mark 7:37 and James 2:1-4 + 8) [optional reading Proverbs 22:2 + 22-23]

Jesus went to this area to have some privacy and time with His disciples; yet He did not refuse to meet the woman with a sick daughter. Her faith in Him although only from what she had heard, overcame all the obstacles in her way.

Imagine you are the woman who came to Jesus. How do you think you would feel, approaching a stranger / foreigner you have only heard about, and knowing He was a Jewish Rabbi? Discuss

Jesus' response to the woman's request was that His priority was to provide food for His children – His disciples (Mark 7:27)

Do you have enough awareness of your spiritual needs to persevere in your relationship with Jesus, even in the face of obstacles? Discuss

What obstacles do you face in your relationship with Him? Discuss

Jesus loved the woman who came to Him for help. Her faith in Him was real and would not let her take 'no' for an answer (Mark 7:28)

Do you sometimes give up when God's answer to your prayer seems to be 'no'? Discuss (Mark 7:27)

Both times the Gospels record Jesus commending great faith, He was responding to the faith of Gentiles – not Jews – and in both situations He healed at a distance (Mark 7: 29) [optional reading Matthew 8:5-13].

What does this tell you about Jesus? Discuss

Only Mark describes the actual healing of the deaf and dumb man. Through this record we catch a glimpse of Jesus' attitude towards those who come to Him for help – respect, consideration and indication that help comes from God (Mark 7:33-34).

Why did Jesus sigh before healing the man? Discuss (Mark 7:34)

[optional reading Romans 8:22-23 + 26-28]

How often do you measure yourself (attitudes /actions) against God's standards? Discuss

IN CLOSING

Deeds of loving service reveal our commitment to, and faith in, God / Christ. How we respond to the vulnerable (poor and helpless) in society is verification of the inner transformation Christ-followers undergo

Are you sometimes more impressed by status / wealth than you are distressed by the needy in society?

PRAYER

O God of love, your embrace includes everyone.
Open our hearts and minds to your generous will,
that in all we say and do we proclaim Christ's love
and serve the needs of our neighbours. Amen