

## **Nov 5 – Leader’s Guide**

### **Mark 1:40-45, Romans 14 - “Disruptive Hospitality”**

#### **Readings: Mark 1:40-45, Romans 14:1-23**

1. Read Mark 1:40-45. What are some of the ways that the people in this passage acted in socially unexpected or offensive ways?

*Mentioned in the sermon: The leper came near Jesus instead of keeping his distance. The leper trusted that Jesus could heal him, just being unsure of his willingness. Jesus touched the leper.*

*Not mentioned in the sermon: verses 43-45 are also surprising in how Jesus forbids the man to speak, and he disobeys him. Are there other things that strike your group?*

2. People with leprosy in 1<sup>st</sup> century Israel were feared and avoided. What are some equivalent reasons that people might be feared and avoided today? Who do you find yourself avoiding or fearing?

*Some possibilities: people with some diseases (Hansen’s disease, HIV/AIDS); people who are unhoused or street-involved; those with poor hygiene; those under the influence of drugs or alcohol; those living with mental health disorders. Think about who might make you uncomfortable and if you are willing, share that with the group. Allow a space for sharing with no judgment.*

3. Sometimes when we find ourselves avoiding someone, it’s more because we are afraid of what others might think than anything else. Think of some times in the gospels when Jesus disregarded what people might think in order to show love to outcast or marginalised people. What can we learn from his example?

*A few examples: Jesus speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well; Jesus hanging out with prostitutes, tax collectors, and ‘sinners’. Jesus’ courage is everywhere in the gospels. I think a large part of that courage came from his understanding of what was important, and what wasn’t. Explore with your group what kind of repercussions we may deal with when interacting with socially ‘unacceptable’ people.*

4. Read Romans 14. How would you summarise what Paul is saying in this passage? Why do you think he found it so important?

*In matters that are not central to salvation, there may be disagreements in the body of Christ, with different people coming to different conclusions. Paul is saying that because it is not central to salvation, the most important thing is that we are acting in love to each other. He saw the potential for the unity of the church to be*

*torn apart over issues that were not at the heart of faith, which could have the effect of people leaving the faith, and he was determined to prevent that if possible.*

5. Why do you think it is hard for us to associate with people who have different convictions than we do? Another way to look at this is examining our own friend and family groups. Do we spend time with people who are like-minded in matters over which we feel strongly? Why is that?

*There are multiple answers to this. It is natural to enjoy spending time with like-minded people. We also can inadvertently 'close' our circles through social media platforms which filter out any opposing viewpoints. If we are vocal about our opinions, we also may have the inadvertent effect of forcing people who disagree to remain silent rather than risk relationship damage. Try to elicit some of this in your group, and allow for conversation.*

6. Romans 14:22 says that we are to keep our convictions to ourselves and act according to them, without trying to force them on others. Why do you think we are often so eager to make our opinions known? What are some good motivations for this? What are less good motivations?

*Often we come to our opinions honestly and with a lot of conviction, and it feels natural to want to share the results of our learning. Sometimes it feels like standing up for vulnerable people – which it may be. Sometimes it may be virtue-signalling, or showing that we fit in. Explore with your group how Paul's advice may be beneficial in Christian communities, and what the detriments might be.*

7. The Greek word *splagchnizomai*, meaning the compassion of Jesus, is used not just in Mark 1:41 but also
  - a. For the grieving (Luke 7:13 - the widow of Nain)
  - b. For the sick (Matt 20:34 - healing the blind)
  - c. For the confused and helpless (Matt 9:36 - like sheep without a shepherd)
  - d. For the hungry and tired (Matt 15:32 - they have been here 3 days)
  - e. For the beaten down (Luke 10:33 - Good Samaritan)
  - f. For those who have lost their way (Luke 15:20 - Prodigal Son)

How have you felt the compassion of Jesus?

*To end on a positive, less potentially controversial note – allow space for this question. If possible, think of your own example to share first. With the group, note how many examples are Jesus speaking or acting through other people.*