

Awkward Conversations.

(something needs to change)

Series Outline:

- > **Week One: Jesus in Nazareth (4:14-30)** <
- Week Two: Healing Simon's Mother-in-Law, then rest (4:38-44)
- Week Three: Faith of the Centurion (7:1-10)
- Week Four: The Widow's Son in Nain (7:11-17)
- Week Five: Parable of the Sower (8:1-15)
- Week Six: Persisting in Prayer and Getting the Spirit (11:1-13)
- Week Seven: The High Cost (18:18-30)
- Week Eight: Emmaus (24:13-35)

SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM / WEEK ONE

SCRIPTURE: Luke 4:14-30 – Jesus Launches His Ministry
THE BIG IDEA: Something needs to change. Jesus is the driver of that change.

CULTURAL CONTEXT

Setting: Nazareth.

This village of sixteen hundred to two thousand inhabitants was Jesus' hometown. Due to its small size, Jesus would have likely been well-known. However, like other prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus ends up being rejected by his own community.

Though Nazareth was a rural town and had a sketchy reputation (possibly the home of bandits that fought Roman soldiers), it was only four miles from the capital of Galilee, Sepphoris. This city was the center for a messianic-style revolt in A.D. 6, and had been destroyed by the Romans right around the time Jesus was born. Sepphoris was soon rebuilt but the region, including Nazareth, had grown cautious about messianic announcements. This sense of caution and fear comes to the fore when Jesus makes his own messianic claims.

BIBLICAL INTENT/IMPLICATIONS : Scandal after Scandal

1. Jesus cuts off Scripture in mid-sentence

Jesus doesn't read the final words in the Isaiah text speaking of the "vengeance of the Lord."

¹⁸ "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2)

Jesus makes a controversial statement when He omits the "vengeance of God." Many Jews believed that when the Messiah came God's judgment would immediately follow. Sinners would be punished so the world would be set aright. Rather, Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom of God, a time when God's mercy would woo sinners as the oppressed were freed. (See Matthew 13:24-30)

2. Jesus spotlights the marginalized

Jesus tells the story of the widows and lepers—the socially marginalized.

Note that in the midst of national turmoil God sends the prophets to care for the most socially vulnerable and ostracized.

3. Jesus pursues the unrighteous and unworthy

Jesus reminds them of the prophets' pursuit of the Gentiles, the very ones who were Israel's enemies. Jesus moves toward the religiously marginalized.

Jesus' remarks were sure to sting since the Jews were occupied by Rome at the time. Yet, Jesus not only cites two examples of God's move toward the Gentiles, Jesus also strikes His listeners with a challenge. He essentially tells them if they don't embrace the message of God's Kingdom, the most religiously marginalized—the Gentiles—will.

HOW TO USE THIS CURRICULUM

Encourage members to read the Scripture before group; if they weren't at Warehouse on Sunday they can download the MP3 at www.warehouse242.org. During group read the passage together. Have extra Bibles available to ensure everyone has a copy. The goal of Scripture—and of this discussion material—is not information expansion but rather increased intimacy with the Father, Son and Spirit. It's God who enables that to happen, so be sure to pray for divine insight as you move through Scripture.

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

> The people listening to Jesus responded to him out of fear rather than out of desperation for their own spiritual freedom. How do we as a church community operate out of fear rather than a desire for freedom?

> Jesus risked rejection of His own people to pursue His mission. Are we willing to risk rejection to share his good news? If not, why?

> Jesus' mission to the marginalized and the Gentiles was scandalous. Who might Jesus be calling us to reach? Who might we be resistant to share His Good News with because it seems impossible or ridiculous?

> How could our small group be living out Jesus' mission? How might we engage our normal friends together? How might we serve together?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

> Jesus says "today" the Scriptures were fulfilled in Him. *Today*, in what areas of your life are you desperate for Jesus' good news?

> What normal friends might He be calling you to pursue?

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Pray for each other's normal friends together.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

Check out Bono's speech that references Luke 4 and Jesus' revolutionary hope for the poor: www.americanrhethoric.com/speeches/bononationalprayerbreakfast.htm

QUESTIONS? contact tamara@warehouse242.org
or go to warehouse242.org/SGresources