

Why we need the Gospel

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Introduction

[Watch the short video] - *if showing the video during the small group meeting*

There is a Bernstein Bear's book that tells the story of how Brother and Sister Bear break their mother's lamp and then choose to lie about what happened. In the end, the two little bears learn a valuable moral lesson about not lying, and the lamp is restored by gluing it back together. If only our real lives always worked out this well in the end! But think for a moment how different the story might feel if there was no answer for that broken lamp? What if the lamp was so broken no amount of super glue would work?

The recorded words and works of Jesus in the New Testament and the letters that follow all point to one reality: Humankind is broken beyond repair and in need of a miraculous intervention if there is to be any hope of wholeness and well-being. And as we grope around in the darkness of our souls searching for that one thing that will fix us and put us back together, we often try to find the answer in other people or material things that can never ultimately heal us. The Bible calls this Idolatry; taking a good thing and making it an ultimate thing. Have you experienced this in your own life?

In Psalm 16:2 David writes that "apart from the Lord I have no good thing". David, who had every earthly possession and relationship a man could want, a man who was tempted to turn these good things into ultimate things, confessed that none of those relationships or possessions or power would matter if he did not have his relationship with God. He knew he was broken and that left to his own devices would remain that way without God. Is this the story of your life?

In this week's study we want to explore the depth of our brokenness and our deep need for outside intervention. We want to better understand how we are tempted to worship the creation instead of the creator. We want to come face to face with our real condition apart from Christ, in the hopes that this realization will lead us back to our loving Savior.

Group Question: Talk about a time in your life when you put something or someone other than Jesus at the center of your life. How did it make you feel? What was the outcome?

Encountering the Word

Read: Psalm 51:1-12 & Romans 1:21-32 (NIV)

Discuss:

Psalm 51

1. Why did David write Psalm 51?

** Most scholars believe he wrote this after he committed the sins of adultery with Bathsheba, the subsequent murder of her husband, and then the promised death of his son.*

2. How can David be both a murderer and an adulterer and at the same time have the Lord say of him in the book of Acts that he was “a man after God’s own heart”? How are we to understand this apparent contradiction? What does this say about the human condition?

3. Why does a man like King David, who has everything earthly and needs nothing, still find himself in rebellion towards God? What causes this? Do you see this in yourself?

Romans 1

1. How is it possible to “know God” and yet still act in this way (v. 21-23)? What does this say about our tendency to chase after idols?

2. What sins have arisen to the surface in your life when Jesus is not central (v.29-31)?

3. Paul uses the word “exchanged” several times in this passage. It appears to be a choice. How does this shed light on our modern day idolatry (ex. turning a good thing into an ultimate thing)?

4. How would regularly giving thanks combat our tendency towards idolatry....or would it? See verse 21.

5. How does being honest about our sinfulness and natural bent towards the worship of created things prepare us to hear and receive the good news about Jesus Christ?

6. Christian friend, be honest with yourself: Today, right now, do you need to be saved and cleaned up from “a few sins”, or do you need a total rescue?

7. Why is the Gospel message such Good News in light of all of this?

Responding to Jesus

Personal Response: Spend time right now, or this week, writing out your own Psalm 51 lament. Be honest before God, confess your idols and your tendency to go astray. Cry out to Him and tell Him how much you need Him. Thank Him for his mercy, grace, and faithfulness.

Group Response: Think about ways to facilitate honesty and transparency amongst group members. How can you create consistent time where people can share with one another what is going on in their soul and what they need prayer for. How can you become a “safer” group where people can confess their idols, repent, and move back towards Christ?

Also, consider hosting a night of worship with your group. Bring an item that represents a temptation or idol in your life and place it on a cross or altar. Worship the Lord and give thanks. Pray for one another and welcome more of the Holy Spirit into your life and group.

Group Prayer:

Father God, we love you. We thank you that no matter what condition we find our heart in, no matter how we feel or what we've done, we are welcomed into your presence because of our Savior Jesus. Thank you that nothing we ever do will change your love and faithfulness towards us.

Lord, we confess our idols and our tendency to stray from you. We are broken at the core of who we are. We know this hurts you and breaks your heart. We don't want this for ourselves and for others. We long to always have you on the throne of our lives. Nothing else in this world compares to you. Please rescue us again today and put us back together. For your glory and for our good. Amen.