



B REVEALING WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

Healing from leprosy is at the heart of the Gospel



Why use this Bible study?

This Bible study helps us explore how accepting, loving and seeking healing for people with leprosy is at the heart of the Christian Gospel.



Clean and unclean

Read Matthew 8: 1–4

In this passage, Jesus is on his way down from the mountainside where he has just given some of his most important teaching on the Kingdom of God in his Sermon on the Mount. Large crowds are following him, and yet he stops and takes time to engage with, and show love and acceptance towards, a man affected by leprosy. Was there an important lesson that Jesus wanted to teach us at that time?

In verse 3, Jesus put his hand on the man to heal him. In Judaism, someone with a skin disease or imperfections on the skin which could include some of the symptoms of leprosy, was considered unclean; anyone who touched someone with leprosy was also considered unclean. Jesus radically broke with tradition and culture to show his loving acceptance of a person affected by leprosy.

Read Matthew 10: 1–8 and Matthew 11: 1–6

After John the Baptist was jailed, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he was indeed the Messiah or Christ. Jesus didn't answer directly but told the disciples to tell John about what he was *doing*. Jesus chose his words carefully, quoting parts of Isaiah which prophesied his coming (Isaiah 35: 4–6 and 61: 1). His reply included the words 'those who have leprosy are healed'. Jesus' instructions to his disciples, when he sent them out to proclaim the good news, followed the same pattern and included the command to 'heal those who have leprosy' (Matthew 10: 8).



Key points

- In both his words and his actions, Jesus showed us that loving, touching and accepting people affected by leprosy should be a priority for us.
- When Jesus encountered people affected by leprosy, he took a bold position against stigma, and gave healing as well as acceptance.

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

Influencing decision-makers

Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene

B HEALING FROM LEPROSY – AT THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL



Questions for discussion

- In Matthew 8, we see that Jesus touched the man with leprosy. Would you touch, hug or shake hands with someone affected by leprosy? What other ways could you show that you love and accept somebody affected by leprosy?
- Jesus sent the healed man to the priest for confirmation that he was healed. Only the priest could confirm this, and welcome the man back to his community and family. Jesus did not seek to only address the physical issues, but the social problems of stigma and rejection too. How can we do the same in our community?
- In Matthew 11, why do you think Jesus mentioned leprosy in his statement to John the Baptist (as it isn't mentioned in Isaiah)?
- If healing people affected by leprosy was part of the evidence for Jesus being the Messiah in Israel, should that also be the case in your country?
- In Matthew 10 verse 8 Jesus tells his disciples: "Heal the sick, raise the dead to life, heal people who have leprosy". Is this command relevant for you too today?



Reflection

Jesus became 'unclean' in the eyes of the religious people/society by touching the person affected by leprosy to heal them and make them 'clean'. We also learn that through His death on the cross as a 'living sacrifice', Jesus took all sin and uncleanness on himself to make us all clean (Hebrews 9: 13–14). Are you willing to make a sacrifice of your time, reputation and energy to serve somebody affected by leprosy?



Notes

This study is adapted from Bible studies written by James Pender for The Leprosy Mission

Related tools:

- B – Attitudes towards disease and difference (Bible study) [*B: Discrimination & inclusion-1*]
- B – Loving the outcast (Bible study) [*B: Discrimination & inclusion-2*]
- B – Jesus and people with leprosy (Bible study) [*B: Health & HIV-3*]

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