

October 9/10, 2004

## Study Questions

*The Good News About Jesus According to Mark*

### The Risk of Religion

Mark 2:23-3:6

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#### Opening Discussion

1. The 17<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher Pascal once said, “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What are some examples?
2. In what ways can religion create a barrier to knowing Jesus? What has been your experience?
3. What might be the religious or legalistic issues in our lives that hinder our intimacy with Christ?

#### Bible Study

1. Review Mark 2:13-22. What do the two parables represent in verses 21,22?
2. Read Mark 2:23-3:6. It’s important to notice here that the discussion related to the Sabbath is still related to the parables in verses 21, 22. The Pharisees are so entrenched in their religious practices they can’t really see the obvious in Jesus.

Read I Samuel 21:1-6 for the background to the David story Jesus cites.

Is Jesus promoting situational ethics, meaning in some situations it is acceptable to do wrong? Is Jesus saying the ends justify the means? What is His point?

3. The Pharisees had taken the Sabbath, which was intended to be a gift, and turned it into a burden. Jesus states, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” What did He mean by that statement?

In what way might we find ourselves serving our rituals and traditions, rather than allowing them to serve us in knowing Jesus?

4. In 3:1-6 it seems obvious the Pharisees now believed Jesus could heal; they only wondered if He would do so on the Sabbath. Their obvious wish was that He would violate their view of the Sabbath so they could accuse Him. How do you explain how these men, who were experts in the Old Testament Scriptures and had plainly seen the power of Jesus, could be so blind to His identity?

What is it about religion that causes people to dig in and defend what is obviously in error? Why does religion so often blind people to the truth?

5. Think about the Pharisees as they relate to the opening quote by Pascal. These men witnessed this miraculous healing and their response was to plot to destroy Jesus. How do you explain this? How could they be so deceived?

How would Jesus be received by the religious crowds of our day?

## **Application**

1. Are there any religious barriers between you and Jesus?

Ask the group if they see any evidence of religious barriers in your life.

2. The danger of deception is that you can think you are on the right track but you're not; you're deceived. How can you help one another keep seeing the truth and avoid such serious deception as the Pharisees experienced?
3. How would you rate the vitality of your personal relationship with Jesus, on a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the most vital)? Is your relationship growing, declining, or stagnant? Why?

Is it possible you have been more diligent to maintain the rituals than the relationship?

What needs to change?