

# Willing and Able

Mark 1:40-45

Leader Discussion guide

## Illustrations Used:

- Leviticus shows us the incredible patience God has in order to dwell with us.
- In Shakespeare's play, Macbeth, Lady Macbeth is racked with guilt over her part in the murder of King Duncan. She is continually washing her hands, desperately trying to get the red spot off her hands.
- Scholarship Application – Jeff Bezos from Amazon vs. Kenneth Ford

## Comprehension Questions:

1. Pray, read the passage, and have someone retell it as a summary.
2. What is leprosy?
  - a. What did it do to someone physically?
  - b. What did it do to someone socially?
  - c. After being diagnosed, what was life like for a person with leprosy?
3. Hebrews 11:6 says, "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Mark explained that there are two essentials of faith, what are they? (That the God of the Bible exists (he is able) and that he is willing to forgive).
  - a. What do these mean?
4. Mark mentioned 2 tools God has given us to grow in faith, holding on to the promises of God and examples of what God is like in action. How do these strengthen our faith?
5. "Normally, the uncleanness would spread. Instead, the holiness of Christ is contagious and cleanses this man." How does Jesus' holiness work differently than leprosy?
6. Jesus told the man to not spread the news, but the man did and Jesus went out to desolate places. How did Jesus and the Leper change places? How is the similar to what happens in salvation.

## Application Questions:

1. Do you believe that Jesus is able? Or do you ever struggle to believe?
  - a. From the sermon: "Do you believe He can? Do you believe He can help you? That He can guide you? That He can take care of your future? That He can heal you? (not will heal you) He can give you eternal life? That He can empower you for the work He has for you to do?"
  - b. Is there anything on this list that you struggle to believe?
  - c. How about guilt or shame? Do you ever feel like you have to do something to get rid of your guilt and shame besides trusting in Jesus?
  - d. What is the truth about all these questions?
2. Do you believe Jesus is willing?
  - a. Is Jesus more like Jeff Bezos from Amazon or like Kenneth Ford? Why?
3. How does this story about Jesus being able and willing to heal/cleanse this Leper strengthen your faith?

## Extended Outline:

### Mark 1:40-45 – Willing and Able

#### **Introduction:**

One of the most important concepts in Christianity is “faith.”

Read Hebrews 11:6 – Without faith it is impossible to please God. 2 essentials of faith:

- “Must believe that he exists” – That there is a God. But more specifically, that the God of the Bible exists. That He is powerful and able to do anything.

- “and that he rewards those who seek him.” That God is not just able to forgive, but willing to forgive. Not just able to guide, but willing to guide. Etc.

So how do we grow in our faith? Highlight 2 tools God has given:

1. The promises of God. Examples: 1 John 1:9; James 1:5; Romans 10:13; Romans 8:28 – “God works all things together for our good...”
2. Examples of what God is like in action.
  - a. The Bible not only tells us what God is like, but it shows us what God is like. Dozens of stories in which we see that God is powerful, and that He is good to those who seek Him.

Mark 1:40-45 is one of those stories. A man comes to Jesus:

#### **1. V40 – A leper came to him.**

- a. This is highly unusual. Lepers weren’t supposed to walk up to anyone.
- b. Physically, it was a devastating disease.
  - i. In the ancient world it was basically incurable and contagious.
- c. Leviticus 13-14 explains how to handle leprosy...
  - i. Leviticus 13:45-46 –Leprosy made someone unclean, and anything they touched was considered unclean.
- d. In order to avoid spreading the infection, and in obedience to the law, he had to move out of his home, away from his family. No human contact was allowed, and he was required to stay 50 paces away from other people.
  - i. This was to protect the people from this dreaded disease. But it was also to protect people and all of Israel from being contaminated and made ritually unclean.

#### **2. But this man comes boldly.**

- a. Came to him – imploring him – kneeling – speaks.
  - i. Rather than moving away, this man comes to Jesus. Why?
- b. “If you will, you can make me clean.”
  - i. He believes Jesus is powerful.
- c. He is not certain Jesus is willing, but he has enough faith to come.
  - i. Not sure why he’s unsure about Christ’s willingness. But he has enough faith in the compassion of Jesus to break the law to come to Him. He believes Jesus is a rewarder of those who seek Him.
    1. **App:** Helpful lesson for us when dealing with illness. We don’t know Jesus’ specific will, but we know His heart.

### 3. V41 - Look at the willing mercy of Jesus

- a. "Moved with pity."
  - i. Jesus sees a man with rotting flesh, who is ceremonially unclean.
  - ii. But Jesus is not moved with disgust. He is moved with pity.
  - iii. So often Jesus was moved with compassion:
    1. Mark 6:34 Matthew 9:36
- b. "he stretched out his hand."
  - i. God moves toward us in our uncleanness.
  - ii. **Illus:** Leviticus shows us the incredible patience God has in order to dwell with us.
- c. "and touched him."
  - i. This would have been the first time this leper had felt a human touch since contracting leprosy.
- d. And said "I will."

### 4. Jesus is able

- a. V41b - "Be clean"
- b. V42 - "Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean."
- c. "He was made clean."
  - i. God is able to make unclean people clean.
  - ii. Normally, the uncleanness would spread. Instead, the holiness of Christ is contagious and cleanses this man.

### 5. Trading places

- a. V43-44 - Jesus says don't spread the news.
- b. V45 - The man goes all over and talks freely. He disobeys Jesus.
  - i. But notice also, he has been restored to society. He is no longer an outcast. He now has freedom to speak. His burden is gone.
- c. But look what happens to Jesus: "he could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places."
  - i. The story begins with Jesus inside and the leper outside. Now Jesus has taken away his burden, and in exchange Jesus is now burdened and finds himself "out in desolate places."
- d. This is not the first time nor the last time Jesus will be numbered with sinners. This is what Jesus came to do, to be the suffering servant, who bears our burdens and suffers the consequences for our sins.

**Application:** So, how can this story strengthen our faith?

#### 1. Do you believe Jesus is able?

- a. Do you believe He can? Do you believe He can help you? That He can guide you? That He can take care of your future? That He can heal you? (not will heal you) He can give you eternal life? That He can empower you for the work He has for you to do?
- b. This passage particularly calls us to believe He is able to cleanse us.
- c. A word is used 4 x's - clean. Leprosy in the Bible is seen as an illustration of sin. It might start small but it is pervasive and destructive. We can't cure it, and worst of all, it cuts people off from God's presence.
  - i. Isaiah 64:6 - "We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment."

- d. **Illus:** In Shakespeare's play, MacBeth, Lady McBeth is racked with guilt over her part in the murder of King Duncan. She is continually washing her hands, desperately trying to get the red spot off her hands.
  - i. **App:** We do all kinds of things to feel clean. We punish ourselves. We do penance. We judge others. We declare ourselves clean. We hide our stains.
- e. Jesus came to make us clean: 1 John 1:7-9.
  - i. If we come to Him, and confess our sin – He makes us clean.
- f. **App:** Listen, Jesus is able to make you clean. He is able to cleanse you completely – no guilt.

**2. Do you believe Jesus is willing?**

- a. **Illus:** Time of scholarship applications.
  - i. Scott Bezos, the founder and CEO of Amazon. Is the richest man in the world. So, he is able to pay for your college. But people aren't sending essays in to him. Don't think he is willing.
  - ii. I remember Kenneth Ford inviting scholarship applications.
  - iii. **App:** Jesus has told us He is willing. He has shown us.
- b. How do you view God's reaction to your weaknesses? Your uncleanness? Look at Jesus.
  - i. Being moved with pity reaching out to the leper.
  - ii. Look at God as he runs down the road to the prodigal.
  - iii. Look at Jesus as he goes and finds Peter after his denial.
  - iv. Look at Jesus, while we were still sinners, coming to die for us.

**3. You can have faith in Jesus. He is able, and He is willing.**

- a. Draw near to Him for forgiveness, cleansing, in prayer, for help to change, comfort, peace, healing, joy, opportunities to glorify God.