

Mark 1:39-45 Discussion Guide

TEXT - Read Mark 1:39-45 (ESV)

³⁹And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.⁴⁰ And a leper^[h] came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." ⁴¹Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." ⁴²And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. ⁴³And Jesus^[j] sternly charged him and sent him away at once, ⁴⁴and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." ⁴⁵But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

- What sticks out to you in this text? Any questions that come up?
- What is going on in this text (summarize the main points)? What is the context for the text?
- How does this text connect with the Gospel? What Gospel themes do you see in the text?

THEOLOGY - What do we learn about God from this text?

- What attributes or aspects of the character and nature of God do you see in these passages? What else can we learn about God from the text? Take a moment to list these out together.

LIFE

- The leper boldly approached Jesus. Do you boldly approach Jesus with ALL your needs or do you feel like you shouldn't bother Him with the small things?
- The leper asked Jesus to cleanse him. What in your heart or life do you need Jesus to cleanse?
- Healing the leper cost Jesus the ability to openly enter a city because of the leper's disobedience. Have you had situations where you thought your way was better than Jesus's way?

PRAYER

- Pray in response to what God revealed to you in this text. If there is sin, confess it to him in prayer. If there is a need, petition God in prayer. If there is encouragement, praise God and share with others.
- What is one personal need you have that we can pray for you as a group?
- Pray for one friend, family member, or coworker with who you want to share the love of Jesus with.

Commentary on Mark 1:39-45

v. 40 A leper came to Him: As horrible as the physical suffering was, the worst part of having leprosy might have been the way people treated the leper. In the Old Testament, God said that when there were lepers among the people of Israel, they should be carefully quarantined and examined ([Leviticus 13-14](#)). Lepers had to dress like people who were in mourning for the dead, because they were considered to be the living dead. They had to warn the people around them by crying out, “Unclean! Unclean!” whenever people were near them. This was not because leprosy was highly contagious. It was because God used this disease as a striking example of sin and its effect on us.

The people of Jesus’ day went further than the Old Testament told them to. Back then, they thought two things about a leper: *you are the walking dead* and *you deserve this because this is the punishment of God against you*. Jewish custom said that you should not even greet a leper. Custom said you had to stay six feet (two meters) from a leper. One Rabbi bragged that he would not even buy an egg on a street where he saw a leper, and another boasted that he threw rocks at lepers to keep them far from him. One other Rabbi didn’t even allow a leper to wash his face.

Imploring Him, kneeling down to Him: Knowing how terrible the disease was, it does not surprise us that the leper was so desperate in his approach to Jesus.

You can make me clean: The leper really believed in the power of Jesus, and had confidence that Jesus *could* heal him. This shows that the leper had great faith because as far as we know, Jesus had not yet healed a leper in His ministry.

In that day, everyone knew *only* God could heal a leper. There was no cure, and no one just got better. A leper could never get better without a direct healing from God.

Make me clean: The leper knew what he needed from Jesus. He didn’t ask to be healed, but *cleansed*. The leper needed much more than healing.

Whatever you *think* you need from God, what you most need from Jesus is cleansing – to be cleansed from sin and a life lived for self.

v. (41-45) Jesus cleanses the leper.

Then Jesus, moved with compassion, stretched out *His* hand and touched him, and said to him, “I am willing; be cleansed.” As soon as He had spoken, immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed. And He strictly warned him and sent him away at once, and said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.” However, he went out and began to proclaim *it* freely, and to spread the matter, so that Jesus could no longer

openly enter the city, but was outside in deserted places; and they came to Him from every direction.

Jesus, moved with compassion: We are often moved with compassion when we meet sick people, but lepers usually did not arouse compassion. Their whole appearance was too repulsive, and they usually made people feel *disgust* instead of compassion.

Luke says this man was *full of leprosy* ([Luke 5:12](#)), meaning that the disease was in the advanced stages. This man's whole body and life was rotting.

Put out His hand and touched him: Jesus healed many people many different ways, but here He chose to heal this man with a touch. He could have spoken a word or even just thought a thought and the man would have been healed, but Jesus used a touch.

This was important because people were forbidden to touch this man on account of his leprosy. Since his disease was in the advanced stages, he was a leper a long time. It was a long time since he had felt a loving touch.

It was against Jewish ceremonial law to touch a leper. Yet Jesus did not break that law, because as soon as He touched the man, he was no longer a leper.

Show yourself to the priest: Jesus told the former leper to go to the priests to carry out the ceremony the law required when a leper was cleansed. Jesus did this first to honor the law of God, but also as a testimony to the priests that an incurable disease had been cured.

The elements used in the Levitical ceremony for the cleansing of a leper (cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet) are the same elements used in cleansing someone who was defiled by a dead body ([Numbers 19:6](#), [19:13](#), [19:18](#) and [Leviticus 14:4-7](#)).

Since lepers were never healed, these priests had never conducted this ceremony. When they had to look up the procedure for this ceremony and had to carry it out for the first time, it would be a strong witness that the Messiah was among them.

Say nothing to anyone... But he went out and began to proclaim it freely: The man may have meant well and might have thought he was helping Jesus, but his disobedience hindered the ministry of Jesus. Jesus could no longer openly enter the city. It's best to always obey Jesus, and we should never think that we have a better plan than He does.