I Need to See the Doctor

Small Group Discussion Guide
Primary Scriptures: Romans 2:5; Luke 18:9–14; Matthew 9:9–13

I. Opening Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of pride, self-righteousness, and unrepentance in our hearts. Pray that God would help everyone recognize their need for Jesus, the Great Physician, and grow in humility, repentance, and mercy toward others.

II. Weekly Sermon Discussion (20–40 Minutes)

- Read the Scriptures together and discuss what stood out from the sermon and passages.
- Don't rush through every question. Spend time where the discussion is most meaningful to your group.
- Keep the conversation focused on Scripture and its application to everyday life.
- Use the insights and questions below to encourage honest reflection and discussion.

Introduction: Recognizing Our Need

Read Romans 2:5.

In Romans 1 and 2, Paul confronts two expressions of the same underlying problem: humanity's separation from God. Romans 1 describes those who suppress the truth and openly pursue unrighteousness. Romans 2 confronts the moralist who condemns the sins of others while failing to recognize their own guilt before God.

Both are sinners, and both desperately need a Savior.

The moralist's danger is particularly deceptive because outward goodness can disguise an unrepentant heart. Rather than comparing ourselves to God's perfect holiness, we compare ourselves to people whose sins seem worse than our own. This allows us to feel righteous without ever confronting our own need for repentance.

- Why do you think it is often easier to recognize sin in someone else's life than in our own?
- What is the difference between striving to live a godly life and trusting in our own goodness to make us righteous?

The Heart of an Unrepentant Moralist

Read Luke 18:9–14.

Jesus tells a parable about two men who went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee was outwardly religious, disciplined, and morally respectable. He fasted, tithed, and avoided many of the sins he condemned in others. Yet his prayer exposed the condition of his heart.

Rather than recognizing his own need for God's mercy, he celebrated his superiority over the tax collector. He focused on their differences instead of their shared need for grace.

The tax collector approached God very differently. He made no claim to moral superiority. He simply cried out, "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Jesus declared that the tax collector, rather than the Pharisee, went home justified. The repentant sinner left free from the wrath of God. The unrepentant moralist left with wrath still hanging over his head.

An unrepentant moralistic heart builds walls instead of bridges, focuses on differences rather than similarities, and approaches others with criticism rather than mercy. A repentant heart recognizes its own need for the grace of God.

- The Pharisee focused on the ways he was different from the tax collector. How can focusing on our differences rather than our shared need for grace create walls between us and others?
- The Pharisee practiced spiritual disciplines such as fasting, praying, and tithing, yet Jesus said the tax collector went home justified. What does this teach us about the relationship between outward religious behavior and the condition of our hearts?
- What are some practical signs that we may be developing a critical, judgmental, or self-righteous attitude?

The Great Physician: Goodness That Heals

Read Matthew 9:9–13.

When Jesus called Matthew, a tax collector, to follow Him, He later shared a meal with Matthew and others whom the religious leaders considered sinners. The Pharisees criticized Jesus for associating with these people.

Jesus responded, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."

This statement reveals a profound difference between Jesus and the self-righteous Pharisees. The Pharisees used their perceived goodness to elevate themselves above others. Jesus used His actual goodness and righteousness to bring healing to those who needed Him.

True godliness is not something we use to establish our superiority over others. It should be expressed through mercy, compassion, and a desire to see others restored to God.

The tragedy of the Pharisees was not simply that they failed to show mercy to sinners. They failed to recognize that they were spiritually sick themselves.

At Matthew's house, there were sinners who recognized their need and a group of religious people who believed they were already healthy. Yet everyone needed the same Great Physician.

- Jesus used His goodness and righteousness to bring healing to sinners, while the Pharisees used their perceived goodness to separate themselves from others. How should Jesus' example change the way we interact with people who are living in sin?
- Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." Why is recognizing our own spiritual sickness essential to experiencing His mercy and grace?

Making the Appointment: A Heart That Knows Its Need

Reflect on Matthew 9:12–13 and Luke 18:13–14.

When we become physically sick, we are often willing to go to extraordinary lengths to receive treatment. We rearrange schedules, sit in waiting rooms, answer uncomfortable questions, and put aside our pride because we recognize that we need help.

Our spiritual condition requires the same recognition of need.

Jesus is the Great Physician, and the first step toward receiving His healing is acknowledging that we cannot heal ourselves. Whether our sins are obvious to everyone or hidden beneath a respectable religious appearance, our need for Christ remains the same.

The danger of moralism is that it convinces us we are healthy enough to live without the Doctor. Pride, busyness, self-sufficiency, and spiritual complacency can all keep us from seeking the One who alone can heal our hearts.

For those who recognize their need, the wonderful news is that the Doctor is in. Through Christ, we have ongoing access to God's mercy and grace. We do not have to hide our sickness, pretend to be healthy, or earn an appointment.

We simply need to come to Him in humble faith and repentance.

- When we are physically sick, we are often willing to endure inconvenience, discomfort, and embarrassment to receive treatment. What are some things that keep us from approaching Jesus with that same urgency and humility?
- What would it look like in your everyday life to treat time with Jesus as a standing appointment with the Great Physician rather than something you turn to only when life becomes difficult?

Closing Challenge: The Doctor Is In

The central question is not whether we need the Great Physician. Scripture has already established that we all do.

The question is whether we recognize our need.

The Doctor is in. Are we willing to make the appointment?

III. Share & Prayer (20–40 Minutes)

Time to "take off the mask." Jesus does not call us to pretend that we are spiritually healthy. He invites us to come honestly before Him with our weaknesses, struggles, and need for His grace.

Encourage each person to share openly about their current spiritual condition and personal life.

- How are you really doing spiritually, emotionally, and personally?
- What challenges or victories are you experiencing right now?
- Are there areas of pride, judgment, or self-reliance that God has been revealing in your heart?
- Is there something preventing you from regularly coming to Jesus for help, healing, or guidance?
- How can your group pray for and support you this week?

When sharing prayer requests, encourage members to include their own personal needs rather than only the circumstances of others.

For example, instead of simply saying, "Pray for my coworker who is making poor decisions," consider sharing, "Pray that I will respond to my coworker with compassion instead of judgment and that God will help me demonstrate His grace."

Close in Prayer

Pray that God would replace pride with humility, judgment with mercy, and self-sufficiency with dependence on Christ. Thank Jesus for being the Great Physician who welcomes sinners and offers the healing and forgiveness we could never provide for ourselves.