

Coming Into Focus: Scandal

Small Group Discussion Guide—1/20/2019

What are some rules about life you grew up with? Have there been any rules you learned as a child that you have since realized need to be broken sometimes? If so, for what reasons?

Read Mark 2:1-12

- Have you ever felt like you needed someone's attention to ask a question, get help, etc, but you couldn't find a way to be heard amongst the crowd?
- Imagine you are the paralyzed man or one of his friends. How would you feel about their method for getting Jesus' attention?
- What does Jesus's response to this bizarre situation teach us about God's heart on rules/conventions/social norms?

Read Mark 2:13-17

- We talked this week about how hated the tax collectors were – so much so that they weren't even worthy of being called "sinners" – there were "sinners AND tax collectors." Try and relate this to modern day – who in our society can be compared to the detestability of the tax collectors?
- If you were about to encounter one of these people with Jesus by your side today, what would you be hoping Jesus would say or do?
- How does Jesus' response of invitation and inclusion make you feel?
- It is not easy to love the difficult people like Jesus does here, but someone who exemplifies what this looks like well is author Bob Goff. In a 2018 interview for Relevant Magazine about his new book *Everybody Always*, Bob tells the following story, read it aloud to your group:

Bob: I have the sense that whoever here on earth we couldn't get along with, Jesus will make us roommates in Heaven. These are principles that Jesus talked about: to love everybody, always, and to start with the people who are more difficult. The people that are my friends and are easy to get along with, they make me feel like I'm a boss at loving people. So I'm trying to get beyond that. From the book, we have a witchdoctor school. These guys were sacrificing children; They were death penalty cases. I tried the first [case] in the country. But then I ran into Matthew 5 about loving your enemies, and I'm like "These guys are actually my enemy because of what they do." So I had to decide for me, do I want to be right or do I want to be Jesus? And there's an opportunity to be bold, [but] you have to be humble. So we started meeting with witchdoctors, I actually met with over 1,000 witchdoctors so far in Uganda. I command every witch doctor to meet with me and they come, and they're creepy dudes. And I asked them, what do you need? And they said, "Well we don't know how to read or write." So get this, I started a witchdoctor school a couple years ago. It's so creepy. And the only books they have in witchdoctor school are the Bible and Love Does. And there's something beautiful that happens, and some of the stories in the book of unlikely calls of people who used to do the most horrific things or have actually changed. Like, they bumped into not all of my opinions, but they bumped into Jesus.

(from <https://relevantmagazine.com/culture/bob-goff-shares-secret-loving-difficult-people/>)

- How do you think Bob's actions towards witchdoctors fit with this passage from Mark?
- How can we, like Jesus be driven by a deep concern for people in our daily lives?

Read Mark 2:18-22

- In this passage we again see Jesus disregarding rules/conventions. What is Jesus trying to teach the Pharisees through his response about fasting?
- How does the theme of Jesus' deep concern for people shine through in this passage?

Read Mark 2:23-3:12

- The idea of the Sabbath is so important God made it one of the ten commandments. Why, then, does Jesus respond the way he does when questioned about the Sabbath?
- Throughout every passage today, what do we learn about God's heart for rules versus people?
- Is there any area of your life where rules tend to play a larger role in guiding your actions than they should? Does the idea of being driven by a deep concern for people change the way you see any area of your life?

Take time to pray as a group for one another's concerns, and to thank God for the way he loves people so deeply, asking Him to open our eyes this week to the hearts and needs of people He has put in our lives.