

**Jesus makes us whiter than white**

**Luke 5:12-16 – Leaders version**

**Check in** – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

**What does the passage say and mean?**

30 minutes

Read Luke 5:12-16

1. What do you learn about leprosy in v12?

*Leprosy was a visible disease which 'covered his body'. A person with leprosy was 'unclean' according to the Laws given by God to Moses in Leviticus.*

*Explain to the group that leprosy is a disease that causes loss of feeling, initially in your hands and feet. The person doesn't notice when their hands and feet are injured, so they get painless wounds and infections which can lead to loss of fingers / toes or limbs. It can also disfigure the face.*

*People with skin diseases were to be pronounced 'unclean' and therefore not allowed in the temple or to move freely in the community, they had to live apart from 'clean' people – see Leviticus 13:45-46. Leprosy was in a class of its own – lepers weren't just ill, they were thought of as 'the living dead'.*

2. Why do you think the man asked Jesus to 'make me clean', rather than to 'heal my disease'?

*It implies that the man's biggest problem was not that he was ill, but that he was ostracised (rejected) by his community, not allowed to be with his family or go into the Temple to worship.*

*NB. The man probably has an understanding of Jesus being the Messiah – he uses the term 'Lord', doesn't question Jesus' ability to heal him, and bows with his face down before him (Edwards 2015, p160).*

3. **SHOUT-OUT** How do you think other people treated this man when they saw him?

*Write the group's answers on the flip-chart.*

4. **SHOUT-OUT** How do you think this man felt?

*Write the group's answers on the flip-chart.*

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Have you ever made someone else feel this way?

*Make sure no-one shares any specifics. Gently challenge them about their behaviour and how Jesus feels about such behaviour i.e. bullying.*

Have you ever felt rejected by your community? How do you think Jesus could heal that situation?

5. Read v13. What does Jesus do and what is so significant about the way he does it?

*Jesus heals him by touching him. People with leprosy had to stay 50 paces away from other people. No-one would get near, let alone touch a leper because touching him made you unclean too. Jesus crosses a social barrier – he doesn't reject anyone who comes to him, no matter what other people think of them or what they think of themselves. 'A reverse contagion has taken place: rather than Jesus being polluted by the leper, the leper is cleansed by Jesus' holiness.' (ibid).*

*Jesus tells him to go to the priests to become ceremonially clean 'as a testimony to them' that he has healed him of his disease and uncleanness. Once ceremonially clean, his broken relationships with people could be restored.*

6. Read Mark 7:20-23. The ceremonial laws of cleanness were given to the nation of Israel to keep them holy. What does Jesus say makes people unclean?

*Sin, which comes from our hearts. This is true for every person who has ever lived.*

7. How does Jesus heal our uncleanness (sin)?

*A chance to explain the gospel! Jesus' death on the cross mends the most important relationship we have – between us and God.*

8. Read Psalm 51:7. How clean does God's forgiveness make us?

*We are not just clean, we are pure – not just clean, but holy. 'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' 2 Cor 5:21.*

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Do you know God's forgiveness for all your sin? How does it feel to know that you are not just clean, but white as snow in God's eyes?

**Check out** – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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4. **SHOUT-OUT** How do you think this man felt?

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