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Getting Started

1. Jot down some notes and share with your group what the concept of Sabbath (day of rest, etc.) has meant to you in the past. How have you recognized this day?

Starting with God

2. Mark 2:23–3:6 contains two stories. Both narratives focus on issues surrounding the recognition of the Sabbath. Both accounts show opposition to Jesus and his actions as being “unlawful.” From the conflict in these two stories, how would you characterize the priorities of Jesus’ heart and the priorities of the Pharisees’ hearts? How does v. 27 bring clarity to these differences?
3. In Mark 2:25, Jesus introduces an event from 1 Samuel 21 when David and his men ate bread reserved for the priests. Why did Jesus make this comparison? What was the point he was making?
4. The second of the two stories occurs in the synagogue where the the Pharisees (“they”) have gathered, not for worship or learning, but to bring condemnation on Jesus. Jesus meets their anxious suspense with two direct calls: (1) in verse three, Jesus calls the man with the deformed hand to join him – eventually asking him to extend his hand – and (2) in verse four, Jesus asks a direct question of the Pharisees.

How would you have felt if you were the man with the deformed man? Would this have been a comfortable situation for you?

5. Now let's turn our attention to the two statements Jesus made to the Pharisees. First, Jesus asks, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm?" As in the story of the grain above, this question highlights the priority of the Pharisees' hearts. What is Jesus' point here?

6. Jesus also asks the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to save life or to kill?" This phrase seems to leave the context of the healing the deformed man. What is the point Jesus makes here?

Living God's Word

7. This story concludes with narration that tells us of the Pharisee's partnership with the Herodians for the purpose of Jesus' destruction. In Mark 3:6 the Pharisees hold Jesus in contempt for doing good by the same people who actively plot to do evil. Consider times past and potential future times where your perception of right and wrong, justice and injustice, may have actually driven you away from Jesus and his gospel of compassion. You may find insight around issues of politics, lifestyle, personal preferences, etc.

8. A good way to protect ourselves from the sin that Jesus calls out in others is to follow his example in the first place. Notice in both stories in Mark 2:23–3:6, Jesus avoids legalism and disregarding the OT law. Jesus does not regard the law as irrelevant, nor does he consider the law more important than the people it instructs. Rather, Jesus points to his righteous fulfillment of the law and his gospel for his redemption of his people. How can Jesus' example guide you in times of conflict and differences in worldview?