



## GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 3

### CONVERSATION STARTER

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If you could spend one hour with any one person alive today, who would it be and why?

### WHAT DOES LOVE REQUIRE OF ME?

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Jesus wraps up his first big block of teaching in Chapter 7. The Sermon on the Mount was all about what the new kingdom reality looks like and how followers of Jesus are meant to live in the world. In Chapters 8-10, Jesus will model that new kingdom reality for us and bring it to bear on the individual lives of those around him.

Matthew carefully arranges the next two chapters into three groups of three miraculous examples of Jesus' power and authority—over sickness, disease, storms, sin, etc. More importantly, in these stories, Jesus will move towards the kind of people Jewish society would normally have pushed away. The first three stories feature a leper, a Roman commander, and a sick woman; These represent the trifecta of people who were often excluded from worship and communal life in the Jewish worldview.

Through these vignettes, Matthew shows how Jesus gives his time and attention to the sick, the hurting, and the outcast. Over and over, Jesus demonstrates his willingness to be inconvenienced and interrupted by those society tends to ignore or actively push away. These stories remind us of four key principles we ought to remember when it comes to how we serve others. Practicing the Way names them as:

1. Loving others by meeting their practical needs.
2. Serving quietly in the ordinary environments of our life (hiddenness).
3. Being both intentional and interruptible to others (available).
4. Working to turn strangers into family (creating kinship).

Jesus meets the practical needs of those he comes into contact with, and he doesn't do it in ways that are flashy or meant to grab attention or clout. He's willing to inconvenience himself for the sake of others, and through it all, he moves toward strangers with the goal of reconciling them to God's family.

As followers of Jesus, we're called to do the kinds of things Jesus did. Which means, we're called to model this same way of serving others. Spend a few moments talking about this idea with your group. How does this vision of loving others, modeled by the four principles above, inspire or confront you?

As you finish your time together, pray aloud this blessing from Practicing the Way:

*Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which  
he looks with compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
So may you, like Christ, go now not to be served  
but to serve. Amen.*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. How has this week's reading added color to what you think about Jesus?
3. What parts of the Sermon on the Mount were most encouraging for you? Was there anything that was particularly convicting?
4. If Jesus were walking physically around our world today, who do you think he would spend the most time with? Who do you think he would call us to move closer toward?
5. How can we develop deeper, more relational approaches to serving those typically seen as "other" in our lives?

## WEEKLY PRACTICE

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This week, we invite you to **identify one small, ordinary task or situation where you can serve those around you with a humble heart.** It doesn't have to be big. Often it's the small acts done with love that reflect Jesus most clearly. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Letting someone else go ahead of you in line or traffic

- Taking on a task at home or work that often gets passed over or avoided
- Writing a note of encouragement or gratitude to someone who works behind the scenes
- Offering to clean up after a meeting or group event, even if it's not your responsibility
- Making a point to include someone who is new or who normally hangs out along the fringes

As you try one of these out (or come up with your own), notice if it shifts your perspective or changes the atmosphere around you. Consider how you might put the four principles of serving from Practicing the Way into practice as you go (love, hiddenness, availability, kinship).