



OPENING QUESTION

To what country or countries do you trace your family roots?

BIG IDEA

In Christ, our community is much larger than we think.

CONTEXT

This week's passage focuses on the story of Jesus' return to His hometown synagogue in Nazareth for the first time after the launch of His public ministry. As the Jews gathered for worship in the synagogue, the custom of Jesus' day was not to have a regular preacher for each synagogue, but rather to have the Scripture read and discussed. Often a distinguished visitor was asked to read the Scripture and then make comments or teach on it. Our story in Luke 4 focuses us on what Jesus said when He stepped into that role of distinguished visitor.

READ TOGETHER

Read **Luke 4:14-30** and have each group member read a verse at a time as you go around the circle.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Read verses 14-16. How do you expect Jesus was treated as He walked into the synagogue for worship on that Sabbath day?
- 2) The Scripture Jesus reads in verses 18 and 19 is a direct quote of 61:1-2. Who are the four groups of people mentioned in these verses? What do they all have in common?
- 3) Look at verses 20-21. After the reading, Jesus applies it all to himself. What is He saying in His one-sentence sermon in verse 21?
- 4) How do those in the synagogue respond in verse 22? Remember these are people who have known Jesus for years and years. Jesus then confronts them with some very sharp words. In verses 23-24, what is Jesus saying about the people's real response to Him, in their hearts, underneath their kind words? What does this say about our response to Him?
- 5) Read verses 25-27. Jesus tells two short stories from the Old Testament. One is found in 1 Kings 17:1-24 and the other in 2 Kings 5:1-14. Break your group into two parts and have each part read one of the stories and report back with a brief summary of the story they have read.
- 6) Read verses 28-30. How would you describe the peoples' response to Jesus' stories?
- 7) Now read verses 25-27. These two stories would have been very familiar to the Jews to whom Jesus is speaking. Think about the two people who received ministry - the widow at Zarephath in Sidon and Naaman the Syrian leper. What do they have in common? Why do you think it is that Jesus' Jewish hometown listeners are so mad?
- 8) What was the point Jesus was making? Look back at verses 18-19 and 25-27. What does this say about who God loves and who Jesus wants to be part of His community?
- 9) Turn to Revelation 7 and read verses 9-12. Who makes up this huge crowd worshipping Jesus?
- 10) What does this story from Jesus' life ultimately teach us about how we should think and live as His disciple?

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CHALLENGE

Take two or three minutes of quiet time to answer the following questions: **Who is someone you're trying to influence or want to influence to embrace Christ and become part of His global community? What is one step you can take this week to move more fully into that influencing?** Then go around the circle and share about who you chose and the specific step you'd like to take this week.

PRAYER

Today, we're going to focus our prayers in two directions. First, go around the group and have each member share of when Christ entered your family tree. (i.e. I am a second-generation Christian, etc.) Then pause and allow group members to give thanks to God for how and when He drew them into His family and invited them to be part of His huge global community called the Church. Then take time to pray for those on your list of people you'd like to influence. Ask God to give you success in the specific step you'd like to take with them.

NEXT STEPS

A terrific and concise read on the topic of influencing others for Christ is Bill Hybels' book **Just Walk Across the Room**. What if you knew that by simply crossing the room and saying hello to someone, you could change that person's life forever? Just a few steps to make an eternal difference. It has nothing to do with methods and everything to do with taking a genuine interest in another human being. All you need is a heart that's in tune with the Holy Spirit and a willingness to venture out of your circle of comfort and out into your sphere of influence to do so. Hybels encourages us to **live in 3D** by developing friendships, discovering stories and discerning appropriate next steps. This is a worthwhile read.