

## John 5:1–18 Sermon-Based Discussion Guide

**Purpose of Discussion:** To see that man-made religion is very different from the life Jesus wants to give us. To reject ways that we have added man-made aspects to our Christianity.

**Icebreaker:** What Christmas traditions do you or your family have? (visiting family, decorating, special meals, how/when you open presents, etc.)

### **Sermon Refresher:**

- After being in Galilee, Jesus again goes to Jerusalem for a feast and during his time there, encounters a man who has been lame for thirty-eight years. As the story unfolds, we learn that the life Jesus is trying to give us is very different from what we expect in a religion.
- In some ways Christianity is a religion; in other ways, it is not.
- Religion says I obey to get things from God instead of to get God.
- Religion adds human rules.
- Religion focuses on the external instead of the internal.

### **Discussion**

1. When you hear the word “religion,” what connotations come to mind? What would you expect a religion to be like?
2. Read John 5:1-5 out loud. Do you have any friends or family members who have long-term illness? What has that been like for them (or for you caring for them)?
3. Read John 5:6-13 out loud. What things strike you from this part of the story?
4. One of the most striking things in the story is that the man who is healed doesn't even know who healed him, doesn't even know Jesus' name. It seems this man was more interested in getting what Jesus could give him than Jesus himself. What are some things we are likely to want God to give us even more than God himself?

## John 5:1–18 Sermon-Based Discussion

- How would it change our lives to realize that what we really need is God himself and not that thing that we want from God?
  - How does both getting what we want from God and not getting what we want from God reveal our hearts?
5. Read Genesis 3:1-5 out loud. Eve added her own law to God's law ("neither shall you touch it"). In our story in John 5, the Pharisees added 39 classes of laws to the fourth commandment to honor the Sabbath. How do Eve's and the Pharisees' religious rules to actually keep people from God?
  6. In the sermon, Keith said "when we create man-made rules and then judge other by them, we are not following Jesus but following in the steps of the Pharisees." Are there ways that we take issues that the Bible says are gray and make them black/white and judge others based on them?
  7. Read John 5:14-18 out loud. At the conclusion of the sermon, Keith asks the question: "why didn't Jesus just heal everyone of all their problems? Why doesn't God heal us now from all our problems? Maybe Jesus didn't heal them and God doesn't heal us because those aren't actually our biggest problem."
    - What do you think about this? How do you respond?

**Sharing and Prayer Time idea:** Think about taking time as a small group to talk about service opportunities that your group or the people in your group are involved with in Columbia or elsewhere. Take a moment to pray for each cause or service opportunity that your group cares about or is involved in. If your group is involved in a service opportunity together, take time to pray for that.