



Small Group Materials

Theme
Week

Spiritual Confusion
13

STARTER



Start by asking the group this question.

Do you admire any Christians who have challenged the religious or political institutions of their day?

DISCUSS



Divide the group into pairs and discuss

Which issues would you like to see the church make a stronger stand about today?

Come back together and list the answers on a flip chart. Decide together whether each issue can be identified as 'spiritual', 'social' or 'political'. List these under each heading.

BIBLE



READ Mark 9.14-29

For our bible study this week we are going to look at four short passages from the early part of Jesus' ministry. In turn ask different members of the group to read:

- ▶ Mark chapter 2 verses 13 to 17
- ▶ Mark chapter 2 verses 18 to 22
- ▶ Mark chapter 2 verses 23 to 27
- ▶ Mark chapter 3 verses 1 to 6

After each passage, consider the following questions

What was it that Jesus challenged?

Why was it important for Jesus to challenge the attitude of the Pharisees?

As you go along, have someone write up 'bullet points' on the flipchart. You are looking to build up a 'picture' of Jesus' encounters with the Pharisees.

FOCUS



- ▶ Welcome people
- ▶ This week we begin our fifth and final section in JSP. This is the most challenging section – and the one that can cause the most opposition. It was the area of ministry that sent Jesus to the cross, and the reason for millions of Christians having been persecuted down the years.
- ▶ As with the other four sections we look at the theme in three sessions – looking at spiritual confusion, social injustice and political abuse. This ministry of Jesus brought him into conflict with the religious and political institutions of his day.
- ▶ The Pharisees were notoriously strict in their personal holiness and religious habits – and clearly Jesus was not 'up to their standard'. They try to compare Jesus with John the Baptist to show how inferior Jesus is to John in his lifestyle and choices.
- ▶ Jesus seems to be saying that the old ways have to change. There is a new reality that has to be embraced. It's time to move on, rather than hanker after the past.
- ▶ The keeping of the Sabbath has always been a big deal for Jews and it certainly rears its head often in the New Testament. Jesus is frequently questioned about his lifestyle and that of the disciples in respect of the Sabbath observance.

APPLY



Once you have had a good discussion on the four passages, look at the overall flip chart sheet and ask

How does this apply to us today?

- ▶ Jesus takes on the Pharisees in their attitudes, so much so that after these encounters they developed their plan to kill him.
- ▶ The plan to join forces with Herod's party is striking, as normally Pharisees would have nothing at all to do with the lax behaviour of Herod's party.

PRAYER



Take this application into a time of prayer.

The Beatitudes in Matthew 5 verses 1 to 12 might be a useful way to draw this time of prayer to a close.



SHAPED PEOPLE