

UNEXPECTED JESUS

GROUP GUIDE

IRRELIGIOUS JESUS

START UP

When we read the stories in the New Testament, it can be surprising to see that Jesus didn't care much for religion (or at least care much for religion as defined by most religious people of His day). Why was that? And what would He think of the Christian religion today?

- In America today, most people have a very positive view of Jesus but a much lower view of Christians and churchgoers. Why do you think that is?
- Have you ever had a bad church experience? If so, to what extent was it caused by the church prioritizing rules or the law over people and compassion?
- Throughout your life, would you be known more as a rule-follower or a rule-rebel? How has this affected your approach to faith and religion?

DISCUSS TOGETHER

Read **Mark 2:23-28** and **Isaiah 1:11-17**.

- The Pharisees thought of faith as rule-following. It's easy for us to think that way, too. Why is it so tempting to think of faith as obeying God's rules rather than living in a growing relationship with Him?
- If rule-following isn't how we earn our standing with God, what is the point of rules? What was the purpose of sacrifices or the Sabbath?
- What does it mean to be compassionate? Get specific. Why do you think it is such a critical component of following Jesus?

Now, read **John 8:2-11**.

- What stands out to you about this story? What were the motivations of the Pharisees? What do you think the woman was experiencing?
- What can we learn from Jesus on how He balanced grace and truth?
- How well do you think you reflect both grace and truth? Is there a relationship where you are struggling to know how to best do that?
- Greg said, "Love and grace are the things that actually change people." Have you experienced that in your life, where someone's acceptance and compassion motivated you to be open to truth and make big changes? Share with the group.
- Greg said, "Jesus' call isn't 'follow the rules.' It's 'follow me.'" What is one thing you can do this week to take a new or next step toward following Jesus? How can this group support you?

LIVE BIG

One of the most powerful catalysts to growing faith is private disciplines: reading Scripture, praying, taking a day of rest, being generous, or fasting. These aren't "have-tos"; they're "get-tos" because they help us connect relationally with God. Pick a private discipline you'd like to try or focus on this week. Share which one with the group.