

BEYOND

January 23 & 24: Beyond the Church to the Community

This study guide provides suggestions for further Bible study and reflection. You may not wish to pursue all the questions or to consider all practical applications. This is intended to be a benefit to the small group, not a workbook to be followed rigidly. We recommend that you take time to read the Scripture passages listed in the Sermon Summary. All Bible references are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.

Overview

This series is focusing on the word BEYOND—that is the place God wants to take us. God is on the move, always leading us —BEYOND where we are now—to some place we would not go, and could not go, on our own.



Take a second look ... Sermon Summary

Sometimes Jesus leads us to the very places we *want* to go—He makes our lives better and makes our dreams come true. But sometimes Jesus has a way of pushing us, nudging us BEYOND our comfort zones or past barriers because He wants us to care about what He cares about.

What is important to God? Can we learn a little more about what God is like, what He cares about?

Isaiah 1:11, "What makes you think I want all your sacrifices?" says the Lord. "I am sick of your burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fattened cattle. I get no pleasure from the blood of bulls and lambs and goats." (NLT)

The point is that the people were whipping up some worship services that they think are really great, but God is saying, "That's not what I want." *Isaiah 1:13-15*

God says it's not just the stuff you do in this church building that matters, but it's what you do BEYOND the walls that matters.

Isaiah 1:16-17, ¹⁶Give up your evil ways. ¹⁷Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows. (NLT)

What does God care about? What is He interested in? God's concern is to bring about an environment in which justice happens and love reigns—the kind of love that would reach beyond the walls—to the orphans and widows and to anyone whom the world casts away, to those who bear the burden of troubling circumstances or who have become weary of life's brokenness.

Deuteronomy 10:17-19, ¹⁷For the Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, the mighty and awesome God, who shows no partiality and cannot be bribed. ¹⁸He ensures that orphans and widows receive justice. He shows love to the foreigners living among you and gives them food and clothing. ¹⁹So you, too, must show love to foreigners, for you yourselves were once foreigners in the land of Egypt. (NLT)

1. Give up evil ways.

I can't escape the challenge to deal with my *own* sin, to think of my *own* nets that are holding me back from following Jesus BEYOND the walls. While there are plenty of evil things I need to quit doing, perhaps my biggest evil is indifference—what I'm *not* doing.

2. Learn to do good.

We aren't saved by good works; we're saved up *for* good works.

Ephesians 2:8-10, ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (NIV)

We're not social workers; we're Kingdom builders—locally and globally. What if we were known for something different? What if we were known for doing good things rather than for just *hating* bad things?

God has called you and me to be living proof of a loving God to a watching world. He asks us to show up not just with our mouths but with our hands and feet to serve, and with our hearts wide open to the community that we live in—ready to love like Jesus.

3. Seek justice.

As we talk about justice and dream of a day when God's Kingdom will be established and no one will be lacking, we're living in a time where more and more of us feel like we've been kicked to the curb or left high and dry. Jobs have decreased; needs have increased. And while the government scrambles to figure out how to fix this mess, it has become increasingly clear that these are the days for the *church* to step up and *be* the church.



Take it to the source ... Bible Study

Introductory question: What was one time when somebody brought the church to you instead of you going to church? How did it affect your view of the church, or of God?

Read *Isaiah 1:11-17*.

1. Why was God tired of the sacrifices? What had made Him angry? How might this apply today?
2. Why can mere words or rituals be dangerous when it comes to our spiritual life? How might this be a way of trying to manipulate God?
3. What are some practical ways that you can guard against hypocrisy?
4. How do your acts of obedience and justice during the week directly affect your worship on the weekend?
5. When people outside the church look at you, what do they see—lots of words without any positive actions, or actions that help communicate the message of Christ? Why does this matter so much?

Read *Matthew 23:23-24*.

1. Why is it so easy to get caught up in minor details and forget the major things that Jesus asks us to do? How can we guard against that tendency?
2. Can you think of an example of straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel? What effect does that action have on those outside the church who are watching what we say and do?
3. How could your group practically display justice and mercy and faith?

Read *Ephesians 2:8-10*.

1. The good things you do don't help you gain salvation, but they are a demonstration of your salvation. How do you display your relationship with God to those around you?
2. Paul says that God has created you in Christ Jesus for good works. How do you respond to the idea that God actually has things for you to do with your life?
3. What are some things that might help you learn to do good?
4. What keeps you from fulfilling your potential as God's workmanship?



Take it home ... Practical Applications

- As a small group, work together to fill one or more backpacks in the *Bag the Basics* backpack collection for the homeless. Fill them up and bring them back on **January 30 or 31**.
- Pool your resources to buy a gift card for the Connection Pointe Benevolence Fund. Bring it to the Small Groups Kiosk on **February 7 or 8**.
- Bring your change containers the *last Sunday of each month* and give *Change for Change* to help families who are in the process of adopting children.



Sermons are just a click away! Watch or listen to sermons online @ ConnectionPointeChurch.org.