

Small Group Discussion Guide

Series: Gospel of John

Text: John 5

Theme: Jesus Brings Life — Even When He Breaks the Rules

Opening Prayer (5-10 mins)

- Pray for the peace and justice in our nation.
 - Lift up Prime Minister Mark Carney and our national leaders.
 - Pray for the Church in Canada to be faithful to Jesus and his Kingdom, above any ideology.
 - Pray for soft hearts to hear God's Word and respond.
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1. Icebreaker (5-10 mins)

“Can you think of a time when someone broke a rule for the sake of doing something truly good? How did that affect your perspective on the rule or on the person?”

2. Scripture Reading (10 mins)

Read John 5:1–47 together as a group or in sections.

Consider reading in three parts:

- Jesus' Action (vv. 1–17)
 - The Accusation (v. 18)
 - Jesus' Response (vv. 19–47)
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3. Discussion Questions (40–50 mins)

The Passage

1. **What stood out to you in the story of Jesus healing the man at Bethesda?**
 - Why do you think Jesus asked, *“Do you want to get well?”*
2. **Why did the religious leaders respond with anger rather than joy at the healing?**
 - What does this reveal about their priorities?
3. **What was Jesus claiming about himself in verses 17–18?**

- Why was this so controversial?

The Point

4. "Jesus brings life even when he breaks rules."

- What does this tell us about how Jesus viewed religious laws versus human need?
- When have you seen someone put people before policy in a Christ-like way?

5. In what ways are we, like the Pharisees, tempted to trust rules, systems, or ideologies more than we trust Jesus?

6. Read John 5:39–40.

- Why do you think the religious leaders missed Jesus even though they studied Scripture diligently?

The Problem

7. The message compares religious fences to **political ideologies** that animate us.

- In what ways have politics become a substitute for hope, identity, or even salvation in our culture—or in us?

8. The phrase was used: *"Jesus is too conservative for liberals and too liberal for conservatives."*

- What do you think this means in terms of how we follow Jesus in today's polarized climate?

9. How can the Church be a "community of peace and truth" as Hauerwas says, rather than echoing the culture wars around us?

4. Reflection & Application (10–15 mins)

"What is animating you most right now—Jesus and His Kingdom, or something else?"

- Is there a "fence" in your life (a religious or ideological boundary) that is keeping you from seeing Jesus clearly?
- How might your group or community help you re-center your gaze on Jesus?

5. Closing Prayer (5 mins)

- Thank God that Jesus offers life, not legalism.
- Pray for humility to see where we've built fences instead of walking in freedom.

- Ask for courage to live animated by Christ, not culture.