



WEEK 3 GROUP GUIDE | MESSAGE BY CHAD BRUEGMAN

START

To get things started, let's go around the circle and answer this question:

In the message Chad talked about his own guilty pleasures. If you were brutally honest, do you have a guilty pleasure?

SHARE

Welcome to our new series entitled, "True North."

In leadership lingo, there is a well-known term used when we talk about living with integrity and staying the course. We like to say that we are headed..."True North." Regardless what happens around us, despite what changes we see and differing opinions we hear, the real leader stays the true course. So how do we know if we are headed true north?

America is known as a land of opportunity. We are known as the country with the bravest military in the world, a self-sacrificing people who believe in freedom and just causes around the world. Some of the finest people you will ever meet wear the uniform, have a badge on their chest, standing ready to respond in our fire stations or prepare the lesson in classrooms across this great land.

America has been a beacon of light for so many in the world, a country where people can come regardless of race and be welcomed with great opportunity to work hard, get an education, and contribute as an American citizen. We are a country made up of generations of immigrants who came here for religious freedom and opportunity. Belief in God, personal responsibility, and morality was, for the most part, important to society and reflected in the memoirs of our founding fathers and in the Declaration of Independence. Prayer was commonplace in the halls of Congress, in judicial backrooms and in schools. Some generations lost sight of what was most important, while others championed great and godly causes. Over time, we have seen an eroding of moral values, personal responsibility, and care for our neighbors; at times it feels like we have lost our moral compass.

We all like to say we love things or people, but we often mean very different things. Think about it for a moment, on one hand we love our family, spouse, kids, girlfriend or boyfriend,

and then in the next breath we say that we 'love' tacos or we 'love' that movie that just came out. When the Bible talks about love, it isn't talking about loving pizza, but a deep, abiding, committed love. Last week Shawn talked about the importance of God's people acting justly, loving mercy and walking humbly with God. This week we are going to dive deeper into what it looks like to 'love mercy.'

Let's read Micah 6:8

In the Hebrew language, this type of love can be described as being lovesick. If someone is lovesick, what does that look like?

Have you ever been impacted by someone giving you mercy when you didn't deserve it? What kinds of feelings accompany receiving mercy when you don't feel you should receive it?

GROW

In Micah 6, God brings up three specific instances where the entire nation was in serious trouble. In this week's message, Chad talked about the tension that is always present when someone deserves punishment, and instead is given mercy. To the one receiving mercy, there is a deep gratitude when given mercy, knowing that they deserved the punishment. However, to the onlooker or the one who has been most effected by the actions of the offender, there is a feeling of injustice to see them given mercy. We all cry out for justice when we are offended, but then cry for mercy when we have done wrong. So what is right?

When Jesus walked this earth, he was accused of playing fast and loose with the law when he gave mercy to those deserving judgment.

Read John 8:1-11

According to the law, the woman and the man involved should have been put to death, yet Jesus showed mercy to the woman. Why was this action by Jesus such a tense moment?

Who was the one person there who had the right to throw the first stone?

Scholars speculate on what Jesus was writing in the dirt. We will never know this side of heaven, but what would your best guess be?

It is interesting to note that the oldest men were the first to drop their stones and walk away. Why do you think that detail was included in the story?

MOVE

As we conclude this week's study, let's recall how the story ends. How the story ends is essential. Jesus was very intentional in how he intervened to protect the woman. Jesus was very intentional in everything he did, as we noted in how he spoke with the accusers. Notice how he intentionally lives out Micah 6:8 in front of everyone and then follows it with an important charge.

Let's re-read the end of the story in John 8:9-11

According to *The New American Commentary of John*:

Jesus' verdict, "neither do I condemn," however, was not rendered as a simple acquittal or a noncondemnation. The verdict was in fact a strict charge for her to live from this point on (apo tou nun) very differently—to sin no more (mēketi hamartane). The liberating work of Jesus did not mean the excusing of sin. Encountering Jesus always has demanded the transformation of life, the turning away from sin. The paralytic in John 5:14 was similarly warned to "sin no more," but in that story the man was also confronted with the devastating consequences of failing to heed the warning. Sin was not treated lightly by Jesus, but sinners were offered the opportunity to start life anew.

This woman received great mercy and then the command to begin living a new life. Why is this so important?

In essence, we are all charged to steward the great mercy we have been shown. How can remembering the mercy we have been shown affect how we live our daily lives?

This week, how can you truly begin to put 'loving mercy' into action? Is there someone you can think of who deserves punishment that you can show mercy?

PRAY

As a group, spend some time praying for each other, especially for the struggles that people might be facing today. If you are in a co-ed group, consider breaking up into men and women's groups to talk more freely.

TO GO

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.