



WINTER CHURCHWIDE STUDY

STORIES AND CROWDS | WEEK 6

Brian Flewelling
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WORSHIP

Begin your group with a time of worship. If someone in your group can lead worship, invite them to lead two or three songs. Alternatively, consider using one or more of these songs from our Sunday morning worship time:

- **We Praise You** (*Bethel Music*)
- **Center** (*Bethel Music*)
- **Make Room** (*Community Music*)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Mark 8:34-38; 13:26-27
- Matthew 7:21-23
- Psalm 25

OPENING PRAYER

Begin by reading Psalm 9:1-2: *"I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High."*

Ice Breaker (5-10 min)

Share a time when a crowd or popular opinion influenced a decision you made—either positively or negatively. How did you feel about it afterward?

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SERMON (Review these together) (5 minutes)

1. Your thanksgiving tells God's story – who He is and what He's done
2. Your testimony can lead others to Jesus, but sometimes hype can get in the way
3. When you tell your testimony, keep Jesus the central character
4. Success isn't measured by crowds or popularity – Jesus taught crowds but disciplined individuals
5. Crowds can be distracting, confusing, and even work against God's purposes

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (35-40 min)

Part 1: The Power of Testimony (Mark 5:19-20)

1. Why do you think Jesus told the man to go tell his own people rather than follow Him? What does this teach us about the importance of our personal circles of influence?
2. Pastor Brian said, "If I can't tell it to Him, I won't be able to tell it to other people." How does your private practice of Thanksgiving to God prepare you to share your testimony to others?
3. Reflection: What you share a story of faith, is Jesus the central character, or do you tend to focus more on yourself—your past struggles or how you've improved? How can you shift the focus?

Part 2: The Problem with Crowds (Mark 1:43-45)

4. Why do you think Jesus sometimes told people NOT to spread the word about their healing? What was getting in the way of His mission.
5. Pastor Brian shared five observations about crowds. Which one resonates most with your experience?
 - Crowds can erode private devotion
 - Jesus taught crowds but disciples individuals
 - Crowds can be in the way of God's purpose
 - Crowds aren't always discerning what God is doing
 - Negative emotions in crowds can be contagious
6. In our social media age, how do we see these same "crowd dynamics" playing out online? How can we avoid being swept up in the digital crowd mentality?

Part 3: Discipleship Over Numbers (Mark 3:13-14 and 7:17)

7. Jesus had crowds following Him, but He invested deeply in twelve disciples. Why is this distinction important for us today? How does this challenge our “bigger is better” culture?
8. Pastor Brian mentioned that “love isn’t measured by results; it’s measured by faithfulness.” How does this change the way you think about ministry, outreach, or sharing your faith?
9. Read Exodus 23:2. Share an example of when you’ve felt pressure to “follow the crowd” rather than follow God’s leading. How did you handle it, or how would you handle it differently now?

GROUP SHARING

1. Practical Application: Pastor Brian ended by asking, “Who are the two to three people in this season of life you’re called to invest in, disciple?” Share one or two names (if comfortable) and how you might intentionally invest in them this week.
2. Testimony Practice: Pair up and practice sharing your testimony in 2 minutes or less, keeping Jesus as the central character. Focus on “how Jesus is so much better than the thing that used to enslave me.”

PRACTICAL APPLICATION (10 Mins)

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

Options 1: Daily Thanksgiving Practice

Each day, tell God one specific thing about His character and one thing He has done. Journal these or share them with an accountability partner.

Option 2: Testimony Refinement

Write out your testimony in 250 words or less, making sure Jesus is the hero in the story. Share it with one person this week.

Options 3: Invest in Your “2-3”

Reach out to one of the 2-3 people God has placed on your heart. Schedule time to meet, pray together, or simply check in on their spiritual journey.

Option 4: Resist the Crowd

Identify one area where you're tempted to follow popular opinion rather than God's leading. Take a specific step to follow God instead, even if it means standing alone.

CLOSING REFLECTION AND PRAYER

Individual Reflection

Take a few moments to quietly consider these questions:

- Private Devotion Check: Is my public activity (work, ministry, service) squeezing out my private time with God?
- Testimony Audit: When I share my story, is Jesus truly my hero, or am I subtly making it about me?
- Discipleship Focus: Who are the 2-3 people God is calling me to invest in this season?

Closing Prayer

Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for specific ways He has shown mercy and done great things in your life
- Ask for boldness to share testimonies that glorify Jesus
- Pray for wisdom to discern God's voice above the noise of the crowd
- Ask God to reveal the specific people He's calling you to disciple

Close by reading together 1 Thessalonians 5:18:

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."