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**Series Big Idea:** Who is Jesus, and who are we because of Him?

**Today’s Big Idea:** Religion vs. Relationship With Jesus

**Leader Reminders:**

* Consider fasting on behalf of your students this week. Give up a meal, and use that time to pray and seek God on their behalf. Let your hunger be a reminder of their need for Jesus. Ask God for alignment with His heart for these students. Ask for discernment and wisdom that would help you in discipling them. Let it be a time of thanksgiving and praise to God, not a badge of honor for yourself.
* Look for opportunities to give students in your group a chance to step into leadership. Let a student lead the ice breaker time. Give another the chance to ask some of the questions. Let them have input on decisions about the group. Eventually, you want these students to be disciple-makers! To do that, they need practice! Eventually, you want them to be able to lead this type of study on their own with a group at school or at college. Even middle schoolers can lead!

**Starter Activity:**

* As you are doing your ice breakers today, give students each a piece of paper and some crayons. Have them draw a picture of a heart, and write words that describe what a disciple of Jesus should look like. [**Youth Pastor Note:** Provide white paper and crayons for your small group leaders to use with their groups, or ask them to bring enough for their group in advance.]

**Ice Breakers:**

* Give any **announcements**
* **Soccer Ball/Hot Seat**
* **Happy, Crappy, God Moment**
* **Prayer Requests and Praises**
* **The Other Six Devotional Follow Up/Sharing the Gospel**: Did you share the Gospel with a friend? Did you invite anyone to our group? (If someone new is there—skip this one … obviously they did. Don’t make it awkward.) How did God challenge you through your time in His Word this week?

**Starter Questions:** *Start your group in prayer. Have a student pray!*

* How many clean freaks do I have? How many of you are super messy? Tell everyone about a time when you found some food or dirty dishes that had gotten moldy! Who has the best story?

**Say This:** Today, we are going to study what dirty dishes and the heart that you drew have to do with Jesus!

**Digging into the Word:** *Have a student read* ***Mark 7:1–23.***

* Can someone paraphrase what just happened in Mark? That might have been a little confusing. What was going on here and who was involved?
* What was Jesus’ point about washing their hands? Obviously they didn’t know about germs back then! But what was His point?
* What is the difference between religion and a relationship with Jesus? How might it seem easier to be religious than it is to have a relationship with Jesus?
* How can we have a clean heart?
* What does a relationship with God actually look like? God is invisible! Give examples from your life or a Christian that you look up to.
* How is the Gospel different from a “follow the rules and do good works” approach to life?

*Now pick a student to read* ***Romans 3:10, 21–26.***

* What does this passage in Romans say about hypocrisy? Who does it say can live a fully consistent life?
* Why did Jesus clash with the Pharisees so much in the four Gospel accounts? Why was He always talking about the Pharisees (religious) more than pagans (irreligious)?

**Wrapping it Up:**

**Application Questions:**

* Is your tendency to be more like the Pharisees (religious) or the pagans (irreligious)? Why?
* What evil things in your heart most often make their way out?
* How are you most hypocritical? [**Leader Note:** Share how you are after everyone else has.]
* What does this story tell us about who Jesus is?
* How is the foundation of your identity starting to change through this study? Who are we because of Jesus?

**Abide Activity:** Have your students spend 5 minutes alone with Jesus and read James 1:22–25. Encourage them to journal on the other side of their paper they made with the heart.

**Challenge:** Encourage students to continue using “The Other Six” to build their relationship with Jesus. Remind them that this is not doing the right religious thing, but spending time in the presence of God.

**Prayer Partners:** Let your students decide how to end in prayer today. As a group, popcorn prayer, in partners, individually, etc.

**Stay Connected:** Text each student individually later in the week just to say, “Hey! What’s up? How has your week been?” Show your students you care about them as a person and don’t have an agenda. Also, post the follow-up social media graphic and devo for the week so your students see it!