

## **Harry Potter Meets Jesus SMALL GROUP #6**

### The gospel according to Severus Snape

Understanding the difference between Jesus being good and Jesus being attractive

1. Have you ever read a piece of fiction that you felt better help you understand the real world, or to better understand a real person or circumstance? If so, can you give us example? If not, would you say that as you look at what you choose to read that you tend to prioritize non-fiction over fiction?
2. Which Harry Potter character do you most love to hate? Voldemort, Severus Snape, Delores Umbridge, Lucius Malfoy, Draco Malfoy and Rita Skeeter, Bellatrix Lestrange, or someone else? What is it about this character that repulses you so?
3. What Harry Potter character do you like or respect the most? Albus Dumbledore, Harry, Ron, Hermione, Lupin, Sirius Black, Doby, or someone else? Why did you pick this person?
4. If you grew up with an image of Jesus in your head, what was he like? What did he look like?
5. Have you ever found a teaching or saying of Jesus to be hard, or cold, or even rude? If so which sayings?
6. Read together Matthew 15:21-28

21 Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.

22 A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession."

23 Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."

24 He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.

26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

27 "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table."

28 Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

7. What strikes you about this scripture? What lessons do you think we are supposed to get from this story?

8. The Christian understanding of the church for 2000 years has been that Jesus is fully God and fully man. That God in his mercy and love for us stepped down into human history. John 1:14 says

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

How hard is it for you to accept this teaching? Why would God choose to do this?

9. When we say Jesus is fully God what are the implications of this statement?
10. When we say that Jesus is fully Human, what are the implications of this statement?
11. Pastor Palmer asked the question “Is it possible that the omnipotent God, in his willingness to humble himself and fully enter the human condition, was willing to experience doubt, to experience being unsure. What do you think of this idea? How could this idea help us more fully understand what the Son of God was willing to do for us? How could this idea be taken too far and actually give us a distorted vision of Jesus?”
12. Have your group read Isaiah 53:2-4

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

What strikes you about this scripture?

13. If people in your group do know the full back story on Severus Snape have them share it with the group. Alternatively you could watch the following scene in the last movie together which reveals a summary of his life: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHoIRZeQNG4>
14. Pastor Palmer said that watching Snape’s experience – his misery and willingness to be misunderstood for the sake of a noble cause gave him a tiny glimpse into a side of Jesus that he often didn’t think about. Does it do the same for you? Did you find this illustration helpful or unhelpful? Snape was clearly a flawed, resentful character, and not Christ-like in many ways. In fact, no real or fictional person can every fully capture the person of Jesus Christ. Do you find such partial allusions to real people or fictional characters help you better understand scripture? Is this tied to how you answered question #1
15. Pastor Palmer claimed that a nice person will never offend you but a good person might. What do you think of this argument? Can you think of a person who annoys you yet is virtuous? If it is not someone we know, can you explain? ☺

16. When Jesus teaches something hard, when Jesus seems cold or abrupt – there are a number of different conclusions and options we could take in how we will respond. What are they ? List as many as you can.
17. If there was one area of your life where you find it really hard to trust Jesus, what would it be ?
18. Close by praying for each other over those areas where people find trusting Jesus difficult.

# BULLETIN NOTES

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## Matthew 15:21-28

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## Isaiah 53:2-4

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## John 6:60-64

On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe."

*"We do not presume to come to this thy Table (O merciful Lord) trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies. We be not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy Table. But thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy..."*

It is in his mercy that he is veiled, and not fully revealed. We could not bear full exposure to his goodness as we now are. His words are exactly what we need to hear even when they are hard. Don't let go of what you do understand because of what you don't understand. This same Jesus is also described in Matthew this way:

"Seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd." He said "Come to Me, all who are weary and

heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart"

Jesus came to seek and to save us and to sacrifice himself for us out of love. Yet, he was completely misunderstood and accused of terrible things. He had to bear his burden alone. A tiny glimpse of this kind of angst can be caught in the story of the character Severus Snape in the Harry Potter series. At the very end of the series Harry suddenly understands who Snape really is after he goes through a process that allows him to see Snape's memories. You can see it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHoRZeQNG4>