

# Small Group Guide: The Danger of a Divided Heart

Based on Mark 6:14-29

## Opening Prayer

Begin your time together by asking God to help you honestly examine your hearts and give you courage to surrender areas where you've been holding back.

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## Ice Breaker

Share about a time when you knew the right thing to do but found it difficult to actually do it. What made it so hard?

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## Sermon Summary

This week we explored one of the most difficult passages in Mark's Gospel—the beheading of John the Baptist. Through King Herod's story, we see the dangers of a divided heart: when we have competing loyalties and refuse to fully surrender to God's truth. Herod respected John and knew he was righteous, but he couldn't fully surrender to the truth John proclaimed. His divided heart led to devastating consequences.

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## Key Takeaways

1. **A divided heart often agrees with truth without surrendering to it**
  - We can admire God's truth at a distance without letting it confront us personally
2. **A divided heart turns obedience into a moving target**
  - Without firm truth as our foundation, we justify decisions based on what serves us best
3. **What we won't let God rule will eventually rule us**
  - Sin doesn't stay manageable—it reaches into every area of our lives
4. **A divided heart leaves a path of destruction**

- We don't wreck our lives all at once; we drift through compromise and justification
5. **Give God what is divided, and He can make you whole**
- Jesus meets our divided hearts with grace and truth, offering restoration
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## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Text

1. Read Mark 6:14-29 together. What details in this passage stand out to you? Why do you think Mark included so much detail about this event?
2. What evidence do we see in the passage that Herod had a divided heart? What were the competing loyalties pulling at him?
3. How does verse 20 describe Herod's relationship with John the Baptist? What does this tell us about how we can respond to truth?

### Personal Reflection

4. Mike said, "It is possible to want the voice of God just near enough to inspire us, but just far enough from us that it can't confront us." When have you experienced this in your own life?
5. Think about the question: "Which outcome will serve me best?" How does this question differ from asking "What has God already said?" or "What does love require of me?" How do these different questions lead to different decisions?
6. What are some ways our culture encourages divided hearts? How does living in a democracy or consumer culture make it easier to negotiate with God's truth?

### Going Deeper

7. Mike mentioned several things that can rule us: appetite, pride, need for approval, fear, desire for control. Which of these do you most struggle with? How has it affected your decisions?
  8. Herod "couldn't let his reputation be tarnished." How does fear of what others think create division in our hearts? Can you share an example from your own life?
  9. Read Psalm 86:11. What does it mean to have an "undivided heart"? What would this look like practically in your daily life?
  10. The sermon emphasized that "Jesus meets our divided hearts not with shame, but with grace and truth" (John 1:14). How does knowing this change the way you approach areas where your heart is divided?
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# Practical Application

## Individual Reflection (5-10 minutes of silence)

Take time to quietly consider these questions:

- Is there an area of my life that I've been trying to manage that Jesus is asking me to surrender?
- What truth have I been agreeing with but not surrendering to?
- What has been ruling me that I need to let God rule instead?

## Action Steps

Choose one or more of the following to commit to this week:

1. **Name it** - Write down the specific area where your heart is divided. Be honest about what has been ruling you.
  2. **Bring it into the light** - Share this struggle with a trusted friend, mentor, or this small group. Don't let it stay in the dark.
  3. **Confess and surrender** - Spend time in prayer using 1 John 1:9 as your guide. Confess specifically and trust God's promise to forgive and cleanse.
  4. **Establish truth** - Identify a specific Scripture that addresses your area of struggle. Memorize it and return to it when you feel pulled in different directions.
  5. **Create accountability** - Ask someone in your group to check in with you this week about the area you're surrendering to God.
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## Prayer Exercise

### Corporate Prayer Time:

- Have each person share (as they feel comfortable) one area where they recognize a divided heart
- Pray for each person specifically, asking God to:
  - Give them courage to surrender fully
  - Replace their divided heart with an undivided one
  - Free them from whatever has been ruling them
  - Help them trust that Jesus wants to restore life, not take it away

**Closing Prayer:** Close by praying Psalm 86:11 together: *"Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness. Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name."*

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## For Next Week

- Read Mark 6:30-44 in preparation for next week's discussion
  - Follow through on your chosen action step
  - Journal about what God is teaching you about having an undivided heart
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## Additional Resources

- **Scripture for further study:**
  - Matthew 6:24 (serving two masters)
  - James 1:6-8 (double-minded person)
  - James 4:8 (purifying your hearts)
  - Joshua 24:15 (choose whom you will serve)
- **Reflection question for the week:** "What would my life look like if I fully trusted Jesus with the area I've been trying to manage on my own?"