



# GEEKS UNDER GRACE

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Joker (2019) | Purpose & Connection | BIBLE STUDY

Facilitator Note: We encourage facilitators to take this Bible study and expound on it throughout the week, allowing it to be a springboard for deeper conversation and personal meditation.

## PRESS START

*Joker* is the first film of its kind within the comic book movie genre. Daring to tell a humanizing, intimate, and oftentimes unsettling tale of one man's battle with depression and mental illness.

**ASK: The Joker has been done in several different mediums and several completely different tones. Everything from the zany 66 version to animated and iconic Mark Hamill and even the dark and gritty version of the late Heath Ledger. What is your favorite version of the character? Why?**

## EQUIP

Throughout his arc in the movie, Arthur is constantly looking for purpose and connection. There is one particular set of scenes in which Arthur is found in Sophie's apartment and wondering the halls of his apartment building – always longing for connection. While he ultimately finds that purpose and connection in the Joker persona – how many of us truly understand our purpose? Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 12:12** "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ." Many parts, many gifts, many purposes.

We meet a woman in Mark who wanted freedom and connection to others and to be considered more than unclean.

**Mark 5:25-34** *"And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' 'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'' But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.'"*

This woman spends twelve years of her life enduring a great deal of suffering, and spends all that she had to help find a cure. Yet it just kept getting worse.

**Ask: What brought you to Jesus?**

Remember the feeling that brought you to Jesus in the first place? For some it's a last resort. You've tried everything and it just isn't working, though something about Jesus works. Perhaps it was depression or anxiety and in him you found peace. We all come searching from different circumstances, though we all have the same end desire: To know and grow in Jesus.

Arthur was riddled with terrible truths and circumstances that drove him to a state of desperation, which led to him embracing the Joker persona. This woman with the bleeding exhausted all she had to stop her bleeding. However, it was ultimately Jesus who healed her.

**Ask: In what ways are you bringing hope to the hopeless?**

## LEVEL UP

*Joker* will go down as divisive among moviegoers and Batman fans alike for an entirely different set of reasons. For Bat-fans, the movie goes against the mythos and dares to set an original voice free from the shackles of comic book lore. Moviegoers may be upset by its bold social commentary on violence. Similarly, Jesus has been just as divisive among crowds since he started his ministry and even long after his death.

**Mark 5: 27- 32:** *"When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, 'If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.' Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, 'Who touched my clothes?' 'You see the people crowding against you,' his disciples answered, 'and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'" But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it."*

As we continue our way through the bleeding woman's story, notice verse 27 points out she had heard about Jesus.

**Ask: In what ways do you authentically love and serve like Jesus?**

While she had heard about Jesus and his power, she thought if only she could touch his clothes she could be healed. In her boldness, she finds her assumption was indeed correct. In the vein of Arthur Fleck's journey, he often thinks of suicide as a means of peace. Early in the film, the camera purposefully shows a journal entry in which he wrote: *I just hope my death makes more sense than my life.* Arthur isn't alone. Every day, there are 129 suicides which are successfully committed. For every successful suicide, there are 25 more being attempted. That's a lot of people like Arthur, like the bleeding woman, tired of exhausting everything they have to get nothing in return.

Jesus talks about his power leaving him. In Acts, Jesus talks about the coming of the Holy Spirit and subsequently the arrival. We now walk with God inside of us – his heart, his power, his authority:

**John 14: 12 -14:** *"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."*

**Jesus says we will do greater things than him. Start small and do one bold thing in the spirit a week. Find an accountability partner to hold your boldness accountable.**

## MOD

Depression is a hard thing to understand. Suicide is even harder. It's as if depression is a mask we can just slip into and still hold our normal appearances all the same. When things like suicide, self-harm, or addiction occur, they are more shocking. When the violence of *Joker* begins, the violence isn't a shock, simply because the audience has grown to know Arthur.

**John 13: 2-5:** *"The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal,*

*took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him."*

The devil was already at work on Judas.

**Ask: How often are you waging war for those going through depression? For those on the verge of suicide?**

Jesus knew the time to the cross was drawing near. He knew God was placing all things under his power and he was drawing closer to a father-son reunion. Yet, here Jesus is in the midst of these men which he has spent the last three years of his life with. He is getting ready to embark on the lowest job a man can do: **Wash their feet**. Keeping in mind, they walked barefoot every week. Through mud, sand, animal feces, water – etc. This was a job typically performed by a servant. Yet, here Jesus is serving his disciples.

**Ask: In knowing people around you (friends, family, co-workers, etc.), what are ways you are currently humbling yourself and “washing their feet”? If you’re not, then why?**

## PRAY

**Ask for prayer requests, but also pray for people who are battling depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts.**

## THE NEXT LEVEL

Ultimately, Arthur in his pursuit for purpose ventured down into darkness. Though our victory has already been given to us, we need to live with the victory of Jesus in mind. A pastor friend of mine told me recently, “we’re fighting from victory, not towards.” Even the bleeding woman experienced victory:

**Mark 5: 33-34:** *“Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.’”*

Remember, Jesus has already given you victory and purpose:

**Matthew 16:18:** *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*

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