

Discussion Guide  
The Ragamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning

A journey to receive 19 mercies:

1. Be here, now.  
Seize the gift of this moment! Make a serious effort to remain rooted in the moment. What kinds of distractions take you away from the here and now?
2. Don't wait.  
Come now with your fears and insecurities. Christ's relationship with Mary Magdalene exemplifies that He loves us just the way we are. What expectations of yourself keep you from hearing this message and receiving this gift of love?
3. Jesus wants to enter into deep friendship with you.  
The Gospel is for poor, sinful, weak men and women with faults and limited talents. How do you enter into that deeper relationship with Christ?
4. Cry out for the Spirit.  
Don't assume that the Spirit of Jesus Christ will act in your life without you taking the initiative. Manning suggests 30 minutes a day of prayerful reading. What ways can you increase the prayerful moments of your life?
5. The person of Jesus.  
From the beginning of Christ's journey on earth, opinions have been rendered by countless experts-historians, theologians, emperors, believers and doubters-as to who Jesus of Nazareth is. In His name theological systems have been developed, worldwide churches organized, crusades, reforms, and renewals launched. Describe Christ as you would to a friend over coffee. Share the Christ you have personally encountered.
6. The call from the cross.  
Union with Jesus in the mystery of His passion and death is the indispensable condition for experiencing the power and wisdom of God in our lives. What can we let die in our lives in order to travel the road to Christian freedom?
7. Through Jesus we know Abba.  
Jesus is the face of God. Jesus taught us to pray the Our Father, when the disciples asked how to pray. Do you believe that God is your Father, or do you find that news too good to be true?

8. The God who is love.  
God's love never changes; when we sin we have chosen to step away from it. When we repent we come back in to the light of God's love.  
How does this knowledge help your personal transformation?
9. God loves you unconditionally.  
To quote a famous song, He loves you "Just the way you are", not the way you should be.  
Try to imagine the scope of God's love when you compare it to the author's description that it is greater than the combined love of all the best mothers and fathers who ever lived.
10. We cry "Abba!"  
Jesus tells us that our infinite, holy God may be addressed with intimacy. Abba is truly our Father.  
Discuss Thomas Merton's quote: We make ourselves what we are by the way we address God.
11. The prayer of simple regard.  
Abba...I belong to you.  
Try the method of contemplative prayer suggested by Manning, that will lead us to a profound awareness of who we are.
12. The freedom of serving.  
The joyful freedom in serving, to be the servant rather than the head of the household, to taunt the gods of power, prestige, honor and recognition, to refuse to take oneself seriously, to be captivated with joy, bear the stamp of genuine discipleship.  
Are you striving to be numbered among the ragged few who learn joyful service or are you striving to join the ranks of legalizers, moralizers, and hairsplitters?
13. Healing through meal sharing.  
Reflect on the scandal Jesus created by sharing a meal with that scoundrel Zacchaeus. By accepting him as a friend and equal, Jesus took away his shame, guilt and humiliation.  
Think of the importance of the Eucharist as a healing meal, and one that Jesus invites us to every day.
14. Washing feet.  
This very personal act is a sign of trust and a sign of service to others.  
Consider the humbling and loving effect of this act.

15. Freedom from your own contempt.

Self-hatred is an enormous obstacle to loving other people. The Gospel calls us to recognize our intrinsic worth, to love ourselves humbly, and to forgive others as we have been forgiven.

The world is filled with examples of people who have not heard the Gospel of Jesus. How do we overcome this? How do we change this?

16. Christ in the person next to you.

We have been given the gift to detect His presence in those around us, because the meaning of our religion is love.

Considering our current national and world events, how do we see Jesus in those around us?

17. Trust in your Father's delight.

Prayer gives us immediate access to our Father's lap. Even though we may be mentally distracted, we have chosen to spend this time with God.

Can you stretch your prayer life in order to fully enjoy God's compassionate caring?

18. Worry is an insult to your Father.

Charles de Foucauld, the founder of the Little Brothers of Jesus, stated: "The one thing we owe absolutely to God is never to be afraid of anything."

Can you let go of worry and allow yourself to trust God completely?

19. The grace of reckless love.

Because of her great love, Jesus forgave the many sins of Mary Magdalen.

Is your relationship with Jesus marked by reckless love? How can we find our way to experience that kind of all-encompassing love?