

THE MARK 121 PROJECT

JESUS LEADS: STAY CLOSE



INTRODUCTION

Our small group studies in Term 2 will be following the teaching taking place on a Sunday looking at Mark's Gospel. The small group studies will take the form of **"The Mark Project"** which we will explain further.

At St Paul's, discipleship is at the centre of everything we do.

We know that Jesus is the only hope of the world and we want people to know him and to grow in him. Discipleship happens in lots of different ways - at church as we gather (including Kids Alive and Sunday 68), in our small groups, in our families, with our friends, through our men's and women's ministries and when we meet one to one with people - as we open up God's Word and pray together.

THE 121 CHALLENGE

This term we are placing the spotlight on reading the Bible one-to-one through our small group studies. There is no greater privilege than opening up one of the Gospels with someone and introducing them to the real Jesus. Everyone has an opinion about who Jesus is, whether he's a moral teacher, a good person, a controversial figure or a myth. But few base their knowledge of Jesus on the most reliable source of information - the Gospel accounts.

This term we want to give your whole small group the confidence and resources to open up Mark's Gospel with someone 121. To have the joy of seeing people come to know Christ and then grow in him. Or to see someone who is a Christian grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus.

Reading the Bible 121 is a great follow on from the +1 relationships we prayed for and developed heading up to Mission 2020. Let's keep praying for our friends and family, that we can open up the Bible with them, perhaps online or over the phone.

We'll be using The Gospel of Mark translated for St Paul's, and in a new format perfect for opening up with your family and friends.

Throughout the term we will not only be equipping your small group to read through Mark's Gospel 121 with their +1, but asking for your input as we develop a 121 resource for Mark's Gospel in the future.

WHY THE BOOK OF MARK?



The book of Mark is clearly and unashamedly about Jesus. Mark 1:1 says, “The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.”

It is a gospel written to focus in on Jesus and that he came for the forgiveness of our sins.

Mark was well-placed to be the author of this Gospel. His family occupied a significant place in early Christian communities, in both Jerusalem and later in Antioch. His mother’s house provided a focal point for the gathering of believers in Jerusalem, and was the first place that Peter visited after his escape (Acts 12:12-16). Mark joined his cousin Barnabas and Paul in their early travels from Antioch (Acts 12:25; 13:2-3). He later worked closely with Paul (2 Tim 4:11; Col 4:10; Philemon 24), and was summoned to Paul’s last imprisonment, also in Rome (2 Tim 4:11).

The Gospel of Mark is usually dated around 50-60AD. According to most early traditions, Mark was written in Rome (see 1 Peter 5:13, where ‘Babylon’ refers to Rome). It is a shorter book which is fast moving and hard hitting! The eye witness accounts given in this story cement for us who Jesus is by laying out all they heard and saw. There are amazing truths nestled in the detail. Mark’s lively and down to earth style was, like its good news, for everyone.

His immediate audience would have included Rome’s Jewish and Gentile believers, and Mark grounds the gospel and its rejection in Israel’s own Scriptural tradition, much as Paul does in Romans 9-11. He records specific events from the life and ministry of Jesus to prove to his Roman audience that he is the Christ, the Son of God, who served, suffered, died, and rose again as the Suffering Servant of the Lord depicted by the prophet Isaiah.

SOME IMPORTANT THINGS YOU CAN BE WATCHING FOR INCLUDE:

- The way things refer back to Mark 1:1.*
- Jesus silencing unclean spirits and even people from telling who he is. This is known as the 'Messianic secret'.*
- Jesus teaching and people's responses to it.*
- Ways in which Jesus is identified.*
- Fear and faith. How they interact.*

APPLYING MARK

As we read through Mark's Gospel, we will be asking three key questions. We're using the questions here to help introduce the book of Mark.

1.

WHO IS JESUS?

In the very first sentence, Mark tells us the identity of Jesus: **He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God** (Mark 1:1). Mark's main focus throughout the book is to unpack what this means, and to provide evidence to support this claim seen in Jesus' life, teaching, miracles, his conversations and climaxing in his death and resurrection. Each week each new passage reveals more about who Jesus is as we are introduced to this remarkable person, the promised One, the Son of God.

There are four key confessions in Mark's Gospel about who Jesus is:

1/ Mark's assertion in 1:1 "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God"

2/ Peter's confession in 8:29 "But he asked them, 'Who do you say I am?' In reply Peter said, 'You are the Christ.'"

3/ The words of the high priest in 14:61-62 "The chief priest then got up and asked Jesus, 'Are you the Christ? The Son of the Blessed one?' But Jesus said, 'I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven!'"

4/ A Roman soldier's recognition of Jesus as the Son of God in 15:39 "Truly, this man was the Son of God."

2.

WHY DID HE COME?

Mark's message isn't just about the identity of Jesus, but why he came to earth. Mark unfolds Jesus' purpose and mission, that Jesus must suffer and die (see particularly chapters 8-10), helping us understand what Jesus came to do.

3.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR US?

Jesus makes it clear that the arrival of his kingdom demands a response. When Jesus first arrives in Galilee proclaiming the message of his kingdom, he tells us what the right response to this news is: "Repent and believe." (Mark 1:15) It's not possible to sit on the fence when it comes to the claims of Jesus. You can either accept him or reject him. Repent or don't. Believe that he is the Son of God, God's promised King, or don't. Over the course of the whole book Mark builds up a picture of what it looks like to repent and follow Jesus.¹

¹. Explanation taken from "Reading Mark" from St Helen's Bishopsgate: Page 6.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As you prepare the studies for this term, and as you challenge your small group members to read Mark's Gospel 121 with someone, we encourage you to get these really helpful resources that will inspire and equip you:

Mark's Gospel

An electronic version of Mark's gospel will be supplied for you to print out or use on a device. The reason for this is so that people can mark them, make notes on them and answer questions that we will be adding to them. This will then be a resource that people can use when reading Mark's gospel one-to-one with others.

Suggested Commentaries

"The Message of Mark" by Donald English (BST)

"Mark" by Eckhard Schnabel (Tyndale New Testament Commentary)

Getting equipped for 121

An inspiring podcast - *Centre for Christian Living episode 27: A page-turner for the Lord*. Richard Borgonon will challenge and inspire you to think about 121 ministry, talking about his experience of God at work amongst the business community in London.

"One to One Bible reading" by David Helm* - a short, really helpful book to equip you for reading the Bible 121 with someone. Or you can watch his online training videos
<https://www.leadershipresources.org/one-one-bible-reading-video-seminar-david-helm/>

"One to One Discipleship Training Series" - found in the Appendix, based on a helpful short training series developed by Ali Robinson in 2019.

*"Just for Starters"*** - an excellent book to follow up with people who are new believers or those who are dry in their faith.

* These titles are available from church, contact Paul Lucas.

MARK 1:1-13

(Page 7 of The Gospel of Mark)

WEEK ONE

Great video to watch [HERE](#)

Open up "The Gospel of Mark" translation from St Paul's, and read Mark 1:1-13 highlighting on the page, and then discussing as a group:



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

In the opening words of this Gospel, the author Mark gets straight to the point, revealing the purpose of his book: to tell us about Jesus and what he came to do.

Question 1

Read verse 1. Here Mark is not just giving us Jesus' name like he is filling in a form or application. What are the terms used of Jesus? Why are these important?

In the "The Gospel of Mark" produced by St Paul's the title "Christ" is used and in other translations "Messiah." Christ is the Greek word for Messiah. In the original language Christ is used. Both mean "the anointed one", the one promised by God for whom the Jewish nation had waited for many years. "Jesus" is the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew Joshua meaning "Yahweh is salvation" (cf Matt 1:21). "Son of God" is the favourite title of Mark for identifying Jesus (1:11, 24; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 12:6 etc) and conveyed the idea of both pre-existence and deity, as well as Jesus' unique relationship to God the Father.

What does Gospel mean? Originally this meant the announcing of a significant event which made a change in world history, like the birth of an Emperor.

Question 2

Read Isaiah 40:1-5. What stands out to you in these verses? How does reading Isaiah's passage help us understand these verses in Mark? Who is verse 2 talking about?

This verse is talking about John the Baptist. In Isaiah 40 we have words that follow Isaiah 39:5-8 where Isaiah announces the coming of judgement and the poor attitude of Israel's king. Perhaps you could ask why this is a bad attitude? Isaiah 40 brings hope to Israel, that God has not abandoned them. Judgement does not mean abandonment (or does it?).

Question 3

Why do you think in verse 4 that John is preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins? Why is that important for us to know?

This is what Jesus would preach (see Mark 1:15). There is consistency between the message of John and Jesus. In fact John would talk about Jesus' baptism in verse 8).

Question 4

Why do you think we are given this description of John in verse 6? What does it tell us?

Read 2 Kings 1:8. Malachi 4:5 prophesies about Elijah coming before the great and terrible day of the Lord, even though Malachi came after Elijah. Therefore, he must be talking about the future. Mark 6:14-15 explains the expectation of the Jewish people. Prophecy is being fulfilled in verse 6, without saying prophecy is being fulfilled.

Question 5

In verses 9-11 what was the purpose of Jesus' baptism? Does he need to repent of his sins?

Jesus does not need to repent as he is sinless - but in his baptism is rather identifying himself with Israel. Here, God the father is identifying God the Son and his approval of him, and we see all three members of the Trinity present for the inauguration of Jesus' formal ministry. This is in line with the purpose of the book to identify who Jesus is. God himself is a witness to his own son. David Peterson makes the point that, "it was not water baptism as such that initiated Jesus into his work as Messiah. When he was anointed with the Holy Spirit, God declared that Jesus was his beloved Son, with whom he was well pleased (Matt 3:16-17; Luke 3:21-22). There are echoes of Isaiah 42:1 and 61:1 in this suggesting that Jesus was being specifically empowered to fulfil the role of the servant of the Lord."²

Question 6

In verse 12 we are given the shortest account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. What do we learn about this experience of Jesus? What does the 40 days remind us of elsewhere in the Bible? How does Jesus compare to the people of God?

This time for Jesus in the wilderness reminds us of the time Israelites spend 40 years in the desert before entering the promised land. The wanderings of the people in the desert was a time for growing character, trust in God and appreciation for his goodness to them especially in what was to come (a land flowing with milk and honey). God would even form them into a nation at this time, a nation through whom God would redeem the world as he promised Abraham. Jesus would be Israel as she was intended.

MAKING IT STICK

What does Jesus mean to you? What place does he hold in your life? When was the last time you were a witness to him? What does it mean to you that Jesus is God's Son whom he loves, and with whom he is well pleased (verse 11)?

As we start reading Mark's Gospel together, this is a good time to reflect on your own relationship with Jesus. Some questions you might ask:

In what ways do you need a fresh and authentic view of who Jesus is?

How do you see yourself in the light of Jesus?

Do you have any questions or doubts it would be good to explore as you study Mark's Gospel?

How confident do you feel sharing Jesus with others? Why is that?

SPEND SOME TIME PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER FOR:

- Our hearts to have a fresh love for Jesus as a person and our Messiah.
- That God will use what we learn powerfully in the lives of our friends and family.
- About who you will ask to start reading Mark's Gospel with you. Encourage each other this week and check how you went at your next small group meeting

THE MARK 121 PROJECT

Now that you've studied Mark 1:1-13, you're ready to read it with someone 121.
Here are some helpful tips to get you started.

IDEAS FOR INVITING SOMEONE

Reading Mark 12:1 is a great follow on for your Mission 2020 +1 relationships. And this is a time when many people have lots of extra time on their hands. It's inviting them to read the world's best-selling book, and to get to know the amazing person of Jesus Christ. It's trusting that God will sow his Word into their hearts and do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.

As you invite people, firstly spend time praying for your friend or family member. Pray for them and the conversation you'll have. Secondly, be positive. God is at work calling people to Himself. Trust that He is working in their life. Spend time reflecting on the joy and privilege of knowing Jesus so that you are confident you are inviting them to be part of something wonderful and potentially life-changing. And remember that while inviting them for you might be scary, it may not be a scary thing for them to consider. You know each other, and this is much easier than inviting them to step inside a church with lots of people they don't know. Some things you could say:

"Would you have any interest in reading the Bible with me for a few weeks?"

"Would you be interested in having a look at the best selling book in the world, the Bible?"

"Haven't you ever thought one day you might pick up the book that's sold more copies than in any other in the history of printing, the Bible? Wouldn't you expect that it's got some good stuff in it?"

"Can we catch up sometime to have a look at the Bible? All that I'll ask you at the end is - 'Did you enjoy that? Would you like to meet again?'"

Whatever you say, make it something you're comfortable with, that sounds like you.

For more ideas and inspiration, listen to Richard Borgonon talking about his experience of God at work amongst the business community in London as he read the Bible 12:1 with friends: Centre for Christian Living episode 27: A page-turner for the Lord.



WHEN YOU MEET TOGETHER

Send your friend a copy of the Mark 1:1-13 worksheet you used in your Small Group.

Read through the passage together - they may or may not feel comfortable reading aloud. You may want to explain about chapters and verses being used in the Bible.

Work through the 3 questions at the top, particularly any questions they have

At the end discuss the 3 questions at the bottom of the sheet

If you don't know how to answer their question, that's OK. Tell them it was a great question, note it down and offer to come back with an answer next time you meet.

Aim to meet for a maximum of 60 minutes - aim to finish up while they still have some questions.
When you've met, send any questions, suggestions or stories to the link at the bottom of the sheet



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 1:1-13

THE PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God. ²As it is written in Isaiah the prophet; “Behold! I send forth my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way! ³The voice of a man crying out in the desert, ‘Make ready the way of the Lord, make straight his trodden paths.’” ⁴And so there came a man named John, baptising in the desert and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵All the Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem came out to meet him and as they confessed their sins, they were baptised by him in the Jordan river. ⁶Now this was the John who dressed himself with camel’s hair, wore a leather belt around his waist and would eat locusts and wild honey. ⁷He would preach, saying, “After me comes one far stronger than me, whose sandals I am not fit to bend down and untie! ⁸I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit!”

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

⁹Now it happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth, a town in Galilee. He was baptised by John in the Jordan and ¹⁰immediately, as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens split apart and the Spirit descend upon him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased”.

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

¹²Immediately, the Spirit drove him into the desert and ¹³in the desert he was tested by Satan for forty days. He was with the wild animals and angels attended to him.



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

MARK 1:14 - 3:35

(Page 8 of The Gospel of Mark)

WEEK TWO

Question 1

Read Mark 1:14-15. What is the point of the detail in verse 14 that John was in prison then Jesus went to preach? What do you make of Jesus' message in verse 15?

While John's imprisonment didn't occur until sometime after the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Jn 3:22-24), Mark mentions it here to conclude his section on John's ministry before starting his account of the beginning of Jesus' ministry. The reason for his imprisonment is given in Matt 14:3-4.

Jesus' message contains 2 statements with 2 responses needed:

'The time has come' - More literally 'the time is fulfilled'. The start of Jesus' ministry has huge and eternal significance in God's plans. All the hundreds of years of preparation and prophecy are reaching their fulfilment. the One John said would come has appeared.

'The Kingdom of God is near' - In Jesus himself we now clearly see God's kingly reign and sovereignty.

'Repent' - changing direction, change of heart, turning back, turning from living your own way to God's way - in attitude, word and action

'Believe the Gospel' - Repentance needs to be complemented by belief in the gospel. Repentance is turning from sin, belief is turning towards Christ. Not just a one-off event, but all of life

Question 2

Using the Bible worksheets or a copy of the St Paul's Mark translation, break into pairs and look at one of these passages, working through the 3 icons:

Mark 1:21-34

Mark 2:1-12 (on the worksheet)

Mark 3:1-12



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

As a group discuss together what you learnt in pairs - What were some of the extraordinary things people witnessed Jesus doing? What do you think was Jesus' motivation for this?

This includes Jesus healing many. It includes the casting out of demons. It includes Jesus teaching, which we are told, was done as one with authority (1:27). Preaching. Forgiving sins (2:5) which was reserved for God. He does all this with compassion (1:41) combined with a use of power not seen before. He does this without asking for anything in return without demanding allegiance, or even thought for his welfare (1:33-34).

Question 3

What do these events reveal to us about who Jesus is?

Fulfilment of Old Testament writings about God's Messiah. It is a display of power not seen before indicating his divinity and authority over the Sabbath (2:18-28) and his ability to forgive sins (2:1-12), his ability to know what people are thinking (2:8). We also see Jesus' humanity and compassion (1:31, 41). We also see him speaking in places where people gather and using images and words that people can understand (2:18-28). There may be other things you may find.

Question 4 - the Messianic Secret

Read Mark 1:21-28 and 1:40-45. What stands out to you in these passages? Why do think Jesus was trying to conceal his identity in these passages?

In these passages we see evil or unclean (compared to Jesus' holiness) spirits recognise Jesus and his authority, ironically while many in the crowd do not. We also see Jesus' authority over those spirits, and see him do things reserved only for God. At the same time we see Jesus' reluctance to reveal his identity. Should his identity be fully revealed too soon the people may have declared his kingship too early, they would have placed on him demands that were not intended. God would redeem his people through a suffering Saviour who would conquer sin and death by offering himself as a sacrifice not taking the world with the sword and lording it over people.

Question 5

Who finds Jesus appealing and who rejects him (e.g. 1:16-20; cf 2:13-17)? Why is Jesus so appealing yet still rejected (for the original readers and in our time)?

Jesus appeals to those who realise their need for Jesus (2:16-17), and whose needs are met (eg healing). Jesus meets their needs without material cost or any demands (his command to follow him will come later). Those who reject him (Pharisees) are those who rely on the law and their status before the people, rather than seeing their need for Jesus. The law and status cannot provide what Jesus can. People recognise that Jesus' teaching has more authority than the religious teachers of the day (1:27). In our time Jesus asks for our whole self which people are not willing to give up. They like what he teaches but reject who he is or who they think he ought to be - when he ought to be their Saviour as well as their Lord.

Question 6

Read Mark 2:23-28. The Sabbath is important to both the Pharisees and to Jesus. Why is the Sabbath important? What does Jesus mean by verse 28?

The Sabbath was a commandment of God for the seventh day of the week to be set aside for His people to rest from work and worship Him. This was not just a command to obey but also for their own good. It was something that benefited all people despite their station in life. God rested from his work of creation (Gen 2:1-3) and has therefore instituted it for His people. The Pharisees viewed the Sabbath as important as a command to be kept, rather than for the benefit and good of people. They have taken what God had meant for good and turned it into an opportunity for legalism. They would rather Jesus and his disciples go hungry, placing the Sabbath above their well-being. In contrast, Jesus saw God's heart or intention for the Sabbath as important for the good of people. Obedience for Jesus meant the good of his people not achievement for acceptance.

MAKING IT STICK

As we have read these stories of Jesus healing and casting out demons, what has been a fresh insight or something that has surprised or amazed you about Jesus?

In Mark 1:16-20 we see the disciples follow Jesus without question or thought for consequences (although later they will question this).

How are you going personally responding to Jesus' call to follow him each day, as Lord as well as Saviour?

What reasons do you have for following him?

What does it mean that Jesus is Lord of your life:

- at home
- at work or study
- at church
- with family

THE MARK 121 PROJECT

Spend some time talking about how you went this week, praying for your +1s, your friends and family, and starting to invite them to read the Bible with you 121.

Be honest with each other, about any fears or concerns you might have. You're not expected to be a super-Christian and your small group is the best place to be encouraging each other and praying for each other as you invite your friends to open the Bible with you. Perhaps pair up and send each other a text during the week to check how you're going with this, and pray for each other.

If you haven't listened to the suggested podcast yet - do that this week. You'll hopefully find it really encouraging - Centre for Christian Living episode 27: A page-turner for the Lord.

If you've started reading Mark with someone 121, share how the first week went. What questions did they have? How did the format work? What do you wish you had done differently? Send through any feedback to the link on the bottom of the sheet.



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 2:1-12

THE HEALING OF THE PARALYTIC

Once more Jesus entered Capernaum, and in time people found out that he was home. ²So many people gathered around that there was no longer any room, not even by the door, and he began speaking the word to them. ³Men came to Jesus bearing a paralytic, lifted by four of them, ⁴and, because they couldn't bring him before Jesus on account of the crowd, they uncovered a spot on the roof above Jesus. After digging a hole through the roof, they began lowering the mat on which the paralytic was lying. ⁵When Jesus saw the faith of these men he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now there were some scribes present, sitting back and arguing in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this man speak like this? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins except God alone?" ⁸Jesus, having understood immediately in his spirit that they were arguing like this among themselves, said to them, "Why are you arguing about this in your hearts? ⁹What is easier? To say to the paralytic, 'your sins are forgiven', or to say, 'Get up, pick up your mat and walk'? ¹⁰But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins upon earth..." Jesus said to the paralytic, ¹¹"I tell you, get up, pick up your mat and go home!" ¹²He got up and immediately he took his mat and walked out before them all. They were all amazed and began glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen things like this!"



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

MARK 4:1-34

(Page 23 of The Gospel of Mark)

WEEK THREE

Read Mark 4:1-34 using the 121 handout or the new Gospel of Mark translation, discussing as a group, taking notes, highlighting and underlining:



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

Question 1

Compare verses 3-9 with 13-20 and find what each part of the parable represents.

The farmer is the one who sows the seed. Is this reserved for Jesus? The seed is the word. You can perhaps ask what people think the word is? The path is where seed falls that is taken by Satan. Rocky ground is where the seed falls and it is received with joy but only lasts a short time and when trouble or persecution comes they fall away. Seed on thorny ground means the word is heard but the worries of life, deceitfulness of wealth and desires for other things take over. Seed sown on good soil is accepted and it grows. How can Satan take away God's Word, when He is more powerful, and His word doesn't return empty?

Question 2

In verse 7 what do you think are the thorns in this life?

Question 3

In verse 17 what do you think it means to have "no root"? (cf Mark 8:34-35)

Question 4

How would you recognise those who are good soil?

Question 5

What do the parables in verses 26-32 tell us about the kingdom of God?

It starts small and grows. This is very different from other kingdoms that are formed by those who build power and take over others often by force or economic coercion. It gathers people (verse 29) not enslave people. Verse 31-32 explains that the kingdom grows to include many not just those who are like us. Even though it has small beginnings, its power should not be underestimated. It is God's work that we do not control (v 27), that grows steadily in God's time.

Question 6

What is a theme of this passage woven by verses 3, 9, 23, 24 and 33?

They create a thread through this section of listening, hearing and understanding. In verses 10-13 Jesus stresses the importance of hearing and understanding. You could ask why this is so important and how it relates to each of the parables Jesus tells in these 34 verses. Why do you think it is important for people to hear carefully (verse 24)?

Question 7

What puts people on the "outside" of the kingdom of God? (v 11)

This could be because they reject Jesus (eg the religious leaders Mark 3:6), they misunderstand who he is and his purpose (eg Jesus' family Mark 3:21), or because they fail to respond to him in faith (eg the crowds Mark 6:1-6, compare with the disciples who leave everything to follow Jesus). They are all part of Jesus' audience but fail to understand what he is saying.

Question 8

Verse 34b says that when Jesus was alone with his disciples he explained everything. What does this teach us about the disciples? Why would it be important for us to know this?

Perhaps 4:12-13 helps us to understand this as parables can hide things and we are told in verse 34 that Jesus always spoke in parables. Perhaps confining to a few means there is less room for dispute and misunderstanding especially after Jesus leaves. Also look at Acts 2:42 to see the importance of Jesus teaching the disciples. They spoke scripture. We must remember to teach and preach what has been handed to us by Jesus' disciples and no one else. We must test everything against their teaching

MAKING IT STICK

What things do you hear and need to be careful about?

How do you discern whether the things you hear are true?

In Mark 3:35 Jesus says that his mother and brothers and sisters are those who do God's will

What do you think is God's will??

How do we discern what His will is?

THE MARK 121 PROJECT

There are lots of ways to use the 5 minutes at the end of your study focusing on reading Mark 121. Here are some ideas...

You can use the time at the end of the study generally to encourage and pray for each other as you invite people to read Mark 121.

Pay particular attention to how people are feeling about inviting someone - afraid, embarrassed, indifferent. How would you encourage them from Scripture to address how they are feeling?

Look back at the 121 handout with the passage from today - what questions might a non-Christian friend have as you read the passage? What would it be helpful for you to focus in on about Jesus as you read together?

You could take a look at one of the resources from the introduction.

If the group members have started inviting people, talk about how that went. If they have invited their 3 people and they all said 'No', think and pray about 3 more people they could ask.

And as people start meeting up 121, share stories about how that is going and remember to send your feedback to **[stpauls.church/mark121 project](https://stpauls.church/mark121project)**



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 4:1-20

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Jesus again began to teach beside the sea. A crowd gathered around him, so big that he got up into a boat and sat out on the sea while the whole crowd remained on land by the sea. ²Jesus began to teach them many things in parables and in his teaching, he said, ³“Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was sowing, some fell by the road and birds came and devoured it. ⁵Others fell upon the rocks where there wasn’t much soil. Because the soil was shallow, the seed shot up immediately ⁶but when the sun rose the plant was scorched and because it had no root it withered. ⁷Other seed fell among the thorns. The thorn bushes grew up alongside the seed and choked it. It did not produce fruit. ⁸Still other seed fell upon the good soil and when it came up and grew it produced fruit. One seed multiplied thirty times, another sixty times and another, one hundred times.” ⁹He then said to them, “Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear.” ¹⁰When Jesus was alone, the people around him, along with the twelve, asked him about the meaning of the parables. ¹¹He said to them, “The mystery of the Kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything happens in parables ¹²so that, “Though they look, they may look and not perceive, Though they hear, they may hear and not believe, Lest they turn and be forgiven.” ¹³And he said to them, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴The farmer sows the word. ¹⁵Some are like the seed by the road where the word is sown. When they hear, immediately Satan comes and snatches away the word sown among them. ¹⁶Some are like the seed sown upon the rocks who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy! ¹⁷But they have no root in themselves and last only a moment. When pressure or persecution comes because of the word, they immediately fall away. ¹⁸Others are like the seed sown among the thorns. These are the people who hear the word ¹⁹but the worries of the world, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desire for future things come and choke the word and make it unfruitful. ²⁰But there are those like seed sown upon the good soil, who hear the word, accept it and produce fruit – one seed multiplies thirty times, one sixty times and another one hundred times!”



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 4:21-34

PAY ATTENTION

²¹And he said to them, “Is a lamp really brought out just to be put under a basket or a bed? And not to be put on a lampstand? ²²For nothing is concealed unless it’s meant to be revealed. Nor hidden away save that it might come back into the light! ²³If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.” And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear! With the measure you use to measure others it will be measured and applied to you. ²⁵Because, for the man who has, to him it will be given. The man who does not have, even what he does have, it will be taken from him.”

THE PARABLE OF THE GROWING SEED

²⁶And he said, “The Kingdom of God is like a man who casts his seed upon the earth. ²⁷He might sleep, or he might get up each day and night, but the seed still sprouts and grows regardless, though he doesn’t understand how. ²⁸All on its own the earth produces fruit. First, it grows a stalk, then a head, then a full head of corn. ²⁹And when the fruit is ripe, immediately, the man sends out the sickle because the harvest is ready.”

THE PARABLE OF THE MUSTARD SEED

³⁰And he said, “What shall we say the Kingdom of God is like? What parable would we use to speak of it? ³¹It is like a seed of mustard. Which, when sown upon the earth, though it is the smallest of all the seeds sown upon the earth, when sown, ³²it grows and becomes larger than all the garden vegetables and produces large branches such that the birds of the sky can perch in its shade.” ³³With many parables like these, Jesus would speak the word to them, as they were able to hear. ³⁴He would not speak to them without the use of a parable. But in private he would explain everything to his disciples.



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

MARK 4:35- 6:56

(Page 27 of The Gospel of Mark)

WEEK FOUR

This is a section filled with amazing signs - Jesus calming the storm, sending demons into a herd of pigs, healing a woman, raising a young girl back to life. Even the John the Baptist story is centred around Herod's fear of who Jesus is (6:14).

Signs demonstrate that Jesus fulfils scripture. They demonstrate that creation, spiritual and physical, are in Jesus' control. That he is truly God (cf Psalm 107: 23-32 especially v 29). Jesus is not only recognised as powerful by people who are in need but by unclean or evil spirits. Those who are in need come to him out of desperation because no one else can help. However, there is also something about the way Jesus heals and provides and exorcises. It is immediate and complete, showing his authority and power.

These signs also point forward to God's kingdom. It will be a place where people are fully healed, where Jesus rules, where people are blessed and have everything they need.

Through healing and feeding and control of a hostile spiritual world Jesus commands faith. He proves himself trustworthy. Someone who can quell our fears. Someone who gives many reasons to have faith in him.

Using the 121 handout or a copy of the St Paul's Mark translation, break into pairs and look at one of these passages, working through the 3 icons:

Mark 4:35-5:20

Mark 5:21-6:29

Mark 6:30-56 (on the worksheet)



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Who are the main characters in the passage?

Question 1

Answer the following questions in small groups for the above passages: In what ways does Jesus display power? In what ways does Jesus display authority? In what ways does Jesus display mercy and compassion?

Jesus displays power in healing and raising people back to life, as well as his control and authority over nature by calming a storm and walking on water.

Jesus displays authority by exorcising a demon. He has authority even over the spiritual realm. Even demons or unclean spirits know who Jesus is and even declare it (5:7).

Jesus has authority to send people out 6:6b-13. In sending people he equips them and even goes with them. They were given authority to preach repentance and to heal. We also see authority in his teaching (6:2).

Jesus shows mercy and compassion on the sick, the demon possessed, the hungry (physically and spiritually). Jesus not only raises the dead girl but deals with the grief of Jairus as well. He had compassion on the people in 6:34, because they were like sheep without a shepherd

Question 2

What do you notice about Jesus' use of power?

Jesus does not use his power to show what he can do and that people should obey him but rather that he obeys his Father. He uses power to show mercy and compassion and grace. He uses power for the benefit of others by healing and feeding and bringing a message of repentance. Perhaps you could ask about how power is used by humans (including within the church, marriage, relationships). As followers of Jesus how could we use power differently? What does the Bible say about where real power lies?

Question 3

Read Mark 6:32-34. What do you think it means that "they were like sheep without a shepherd"? What is his response to seeing them?

Jesus' response is to teach them. Do you find this unsatisfying? He also feeds them and meets their immediate needs.

Question 4

In each of the three passages that we read, where do you see evidence of fear? How is Jesus asking them to respond?

There is fear in the boat (4:35-41), with losing a loved one (5:21-43). There is fear in the people who lived in the town near the possessed man (5:14-17). There is fear in being hungry (6:30-44), in Jesus sending out the twelve (6:6-13). There is fear in the storm (6:45-56). Jesus is asking them to respond with faith. Faith means nothing without an object and the object of their faith ought to be Jesus. In verse 6:6 Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith in him. His power and authority and mercy and compassion help us to see that he is trustworthy and worthy of our faith.

Question 5

Why do you think the story of John the Baptist is included here (6:14-29)?

We were told in 1:14 that John was put in prison and this story expanded on here. Mark has held us in suspense as to what happened with John until this point. We see a crossover between Jesus' story and John's. They are not independent stories but woven together. We also see the fear that Herod himself had and his need for faith. Perhaps you could ask the question, what do we learn from this character? John the Baptist suffered for his message but never put himself on the same level as Jesus.

Question 6

Read Mark 6:1-6. What do the questions in verses 2-3 tell us about Jesus? How do these differ from questions people today about Jesus and how are they similar?

MAKING IT STICK

Reflect on how you use power and authority in your life and relationships - what can you learn from Jesus?

What areas of your life do you need to trust Jesus with?

What makes it difficult to have faith in Jesus or to sustain that faith (be faithful to him)?

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Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Who are the main characters in the passage?

MARK 6:30-44

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported back to him everything that they had done and all that they had taught. ³¹And he said to them, “Come away, by yourselves, to a deserted place and rest for a little.” For there were many people coming and going and they hadn’t found time to eat. ³²And so, they went away by boat to a desert place by themselves. ³³But the people saw them as they withdrew, and many recognized them. On foot, the people ran out together from all the cities and arrived there ahead of them. ³⁴When Jesus got off the boat, he saw a great crowd and he felt compassion for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. And so, he began to teach them many things. ³⁵The hour was now late when his disciples came and told him that the place was deserted and that a lot of time had passed. ³⁶They tried to dismiss the people that they might go into the surrounding countryside and villages to buy for themselves something to eat ³⁷but in response Jesus said to them, “You give them something to eat.” And they said to him, “Shall we go and buy twenty Denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸But he said to them, “How much bread do you have? Go and see.” They found out and said, “Five loaves and two fish.” ³⁹He ordered them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So, they sat down into groups of one hundred and five hundred. ⁴¹Jesus then took the five loaves of bread and the two fish, looked up to heaven and gave thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to his disciples for them to hand out to the people and divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²Everyone ate and had their fill of food. ⁴³And there were twelve baskets full of leftover bread - also from the fish. ⁴⁴There were five thousand men who had eaten.



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?



Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Who are the main characters in the passage?

MARK 6:45-56

WALKING ON THE WATER

⁴⁵Immediately, Jesus made his disciples get on a boat and travel to the other side to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶Once he had ordered them away, he went up onto a mountain to pray. ⁴⁷Evening came, and the boat was out in the middle of the sea while he was alone on land. ⁴⁸When Jesus saw them straining at the oars at around the fourth vigil of the night, for the wind was against them, he came out to them, walking on the lake. He intended to pass by them, ⁴⁹but when they saw him walking on the sea, they thought it was a ghost and screamed out! ⁵⁰For they all saw him and were shaken to the core. But immediately, Jesus spoke to them and said to them, “Take courage, it is I. Do not be afraid.” ⁵¹Jesus got up onto the boat with them and the wind died down. They were absolutely amazed. ⁵²For they had not understood about the bread. Rather their hearts had been hardened.

THE HEALING OF THE SICK IN THE GENNESARET

⁵³Once they had crossed over to land, they came to Gennesaret and made anchor. ⁵⁴They got off the boat and immediately, the crowds recognized him. ⁵⁵They ran around that whole area and began to carry those who lay sick upon mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶Wherever he went, whether to villages, to cities or to the countryside, people would place their sick in the marketplace and plead that they might have the chance to touch even the edge of his cloak.



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

WEEK FIVE

This chapter presents us with another encounter that Jesus has with the Pharisees. Mark adds the detail that these teachers of the law were from Jerusalem. The “big wigs” from the big city were in town and had an encounter with Jesus. They question Jesus on why his disciples were not following the law and sanitising their hands before they ate. Mark also adds a comment to emphasise the importance of washing and cleanliness according to law and tradition. This introduces the theme of what makes us pure or clean before God which will be picked up at different points in this chapter - through keeping religious rules, external cleansing, being part of God’s chosen people vs the ‘unclean’ outsider.

Jesus goes on to scorn them for placing burdens on people in adherence to man-made religious traditions and not understanding the law for what it was. It was for God’s people to be in relationship with him and is the best way to live, it was not meant to take your life by being a burden.

Jesus also then goes on to talk about what defiles a person is inside them. What is in a person’s heart defiles them as our lives demonstrate this. Sinful acts do not make us sinners, we do sinful acts because we are sinners. Jesus transforms from the inside out.

The story of the Syrophenician woman adds another twist to the story. Someone who is Greek coming to Jesus begging for his help. She contrasts with the Pharisees who they think they are clean and that she would be unclean. She is a Gentile and a woman. Her response to Jesus in asking for the crumbs of God’s mercy has Jesus saving her and her daughter. The person who was the outsider and “unclean” is the one who Jesus commends. The irony is stark. She came to Jesus without pretension, in complete dependence on Jesus and not her ability to do things or keep traditions but in her emptiness and recognition of her need.

Verse 31 has the healing of a deaf mute. This is a show of Jesus’ power to heal but carries the extra level of a spiritual reality. Since chapter 4 the motif of “they who have ears to hear let them hear” has been apparent. When we hear the truth we can speak plainly. The gospel about Jesus is understandable to the youngest person and deep enough for the most learned or wise. The woman in Mark 7:24-30 was really deaf to the law of God as it was given to the Jews, the teachers of the law (Mark 7:1). The qualification is that we have ears to hear and pray for the Spirit’s work for seed to be planted in good soil.

Question 1

Read Mark 7:1-2. What do we learn about the Pharisees to whom Jesus was talking?

Why do you think Mark tells us these things?

Mark seems to go to some trouble to point out that these men were teachers of the law and that they were from

Jerusalem. This means that they would carry some weight and authority of their own. Jesus has been showing his authority in the region around Galilee and people were responding to it. Who knows, maybe some of the local religious leaders asked them to come. The authority of Jesus is continuing to be questioned.

Furthermore, “... the authorities are prime exemplars of the ‘faithless generation.’ As those who think in ‘human terms,’ the Judean leaders replicate Gentile (Roman) rulers who ‘lord over’ people. Rather than trust in God, they use their own power to secure themselves. Because they have misunderstood God’s power in terms of domination rather than service, they have become leaders of an ‘adulterous and sinful generation.’ By the end of the story, they have so abused their power that their authorisation to be leaders will be taken away, for the lord of the vineyard will ‘destroy those farmers and give the vineyard to others.’” Mark as Story by David Rhoads p117.

Question 2

Read verses 3-13. Mark spells out the tradition of ceremonial washing before eating which leads to the question asked by the Pharisees. What do you make of Jesus' reply? What is the sin at the heart of the Pharisees' traditions? What are human traditions that we can hold on to (religious or otherwise, good or bad)?

Jesus draws on Isaiah 29:13 to answer them. He uses the law they teach and uphold to answer their own questions. Jesus explains to them their use of the tradition in regards to treatment of parents. Perhaps you could ask what they think Jesus is saying here with this example.

He uses the example of Corban to highlight how seeking purity before God by religious rule keeping doesn't work. Similarly washing cups and hands does not lead to clean hearts.

The example of Corban that Jesus uses is one issue among many (verse 13). "Corban, for the Hebrew word for 'offering', was a rabbinic custom derived from the practice of devoting particular goods to the Lord as specified in Lev 27:28 and Numbers 18:14... In the case of Corban, a person could dedicate goods to God and withdraw them from ordinary use, although retaining control over them himself. In this case, a son could declare his property Corban which at his death would pass into the possession of the temple. In the meantime, however, the son retains control over the property... Once property had been offered to God, priests discouraged anyone from withdrawing it from Corban in order to return it to human use... A concrete and unambiguous moral good, 'Honour your father and mother,' is not simply thereby nullified but actually reversed by forbidding a child to do 'anything for his father or mother.'" from commentary on Mark by James R Edwards page 210

Question 3

Read verses 14-19. Why does Jesus call the crowd to him? What does he want the people to learn from his "riddle" in verses 14-15?

Jesus becomes their teacher who presents a new understanding of the law. His instruction is not only for those who think they are righteous but for those who are struggling to be righteous.

What they eat or how they eat does not defile them. Being unclean before God is about unholiness not whether our hands are clean or being seen to have clean hands. Not about external rituals, but our inner heart.

Question 4

Read verses 20-23. What do you think would surprise the disciples in the verses? Are there things in this list that we think are more "acceptable" (verse 21b-22)? What is it about us that Jesus is trying to address here?

They would not be surprised that these thoughts are in them, but that Jesus knows.

For the second question perhaps you could ask what of this list is less obvious?

Jesus is trying to address our thoughts. These are things we do to satisfy our misdirected desires. It defiles us, hurts others and angers our Maker. We can see that we need the good news of Jesus to overcome the problem we all have. Jesus is not singling out anyone here he is talking about all of us. This is the bad news into which the good news (Mark 1:1, 14-15) about Jesus speaks.

Some might argue that sin only becomes a sin when it is acted upon. What does Jesus teach here?

Question 5

Read verses 24-30. What stands out to you in this story?

Question 6

Read verses 31-37. Why does Mark include this story here?

Mark includes this story as it rounds a section from Mark 4:1 and a theme of “they who have ears to hear let them hear.” Jesus wants the people to hear what he is saying and this story has the physical restoration of a man’s hearing. The man then turns and speaks plainly (v. 35) in a physical and a spiritual sense. When we hear and understand what Jesus is teaching us we can speak plainly even in addressing our needs and our sinful condition. The people’s comment at the end of the chapter is beyond what the people think about the physical healing and authoritative teaching of Jesus to speak to our spiritual ears.

MAKING IT STICK

What human traditions are we holding on to that we need to let go of (religions or otherwise)?

What thoughts do you struggle with the most of which you need to repent (verse 21-22)?

In the story Jesus shows mercy to the Syrophenician woman. What makes it difficult for us to show mercy to others given that we too have been shown mercy?

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Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 7:1-4, 14-23

THE TRADITION OF THE ELDERS

Now the Pharisees and some of the scribes, having come down from Jerusalem, gathered around Jesus, ²and because they saw some of his disciples eating bread with unclean, that is unwashed, hands, ³(for the Pharisees and all the Jewish people, in order to maintain their elders' traditions, do not eat anything unless they have washed their hands in a fist, ⁴and if they don't wash their hands when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat, and many other traditions which they have undertaken to maintain, the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles...)

¹⁴Jesus again summoned the crowd and said to them.

"Listen to me, all of you! And understand! ¹⁵Nothing that goes into a person from outside can make them unclean. Rather it's what comes out of a person that makes them unclean."^[16]

¹⁷When Jesus had moved from the crowd and into the house, his disciples asked him about the parable.

¹⁸He said to them, "Are you so stupid as well? Don't you understand that nothing that goes into a person from the outside is able to make them unclean? ¹⁹Simply because it doesn't go into the heart but into the stomach and then out to the sewer!" He said this to declare all foods clean. ²⁰And he said, "It's what comes out of people, that is what makes them unclean. ²¹Because, from within, out of their hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²²adultery, greed, evil, deceit, indecency, the evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³Every wicked thing comes from within a person. That is what makes them unclean!"



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

Send in your questions, ideas and stories from reading Mark together 121 with someone by visiting stpauls.church/mark121project

WEEK SIX

This chapter marks a very important turning point in Mark's story.

Jesus again serves the crowd by feeding them and teaching them. The stories about feeding thousands of people are close together in Mark's story yet there seems little progress in people's belief or understanding. They see the sign but miss the point.

There is a significant healing of a blind man in this also that provides layers of insight into the story. How Jesus goes about this is even different. In chapter 7 Jesus exorcises a demon from a girl without even seeing her. Here Jesus performs a gradual healing to bring out the point that this is not just another sign, but is teaching a spiritual truth in itself.

Jesus also dares to ask his disciples who they think he is. We have seen Jesus teach, serve, heal, show authority in both the physical and spiritual realms. Their response is correct but still misguided. They are missing the point of the Kingdom of God and what Jesus has come to do, a point many today still miss.

This chapter finishes with a challenge to us to take up our cross and follow him. This is really the second response Jesus has directed. The first is in Mark 1:14-15, to repent and believe the good news (and the good news is about Jesus Christ, the son of God, Mark 1:1). The second is to take up OUR cross and follow him. We cannot carry his cross. We are denying ourselves and following him. We come into God's kingdom by repentance and faith and we live in God's kingdom under his lordship and teaching while we wait for his return.

Question 1

Read Mark 8:1-21. In verse 4 the disciples comment that they are in a remote place. Why do you think this is significant to the story about feeding more than 4000 people?

Draws comparisons with God's people in the wilderness during their travels to the land God had promised them. Jesus is still meeting their needs both physically and spiritually.

This second exodus-like feeding is happening in Gentile territory this time. This highlights Jesus' purpose in sharing the good news with all, and the Gentiles sharing in the 'children's bread' (7:24-29). This was reflected in Mark's Christian community in Rome which included both Jews and Gentiles.

Question 2

In verses 14-21 Jesus again teaches the disciples but they are not understanding what he is saying or what they have seen (verse 18). What is significant about Jesus questions and the answer of the disciples regarding the number of baskets collected after the meal?

They were so blinded by their immediate bodily needs that they had again forgotten to seek first God's kingdom, with the faith that, as they did this, their bodily needs would be met, as those of the hungry crowds had been met twice already (verses 19-20). As Jesus said, they still did not understand (verse 21): see again 6:8, where Jesus had forbidden them to take provision for their own needs, and yet those needs had obviously been met by God." Mark by Alan Cole p199. Also Jesus is trying to remind that God not only meets their needs but in abundance. Could this be a reflection also of what God has done in Jesus in that it more than provides forgiveness for sins and satisfies God's wrath?

Question 3

Can you think of a time when you have focused on an immediate need and misunderstood the bigger picture?

Question 4

Read verses 22-26. What do you notice is different in this healing to previous incidents? Why is this significant to the story?

This is significant because it again uses the physical healing to highlight the spiritual. The eyes of the disciples and the people are progressively being opened to the Kingdom of God. The two miracles in chapter 7 and 8 of healing a deaf person and a blind person highlight Jesus' comment in verses such as 8:18.

Question 5

Read verses 27-33. Jesus asks an important question here. The disciples answer in several different ways. What does it mean that Jesus is Messiah to Peter at this time and to us? In what ways do people think of Jesus today?

This is a high point in Mark's gospel, revealing Jesus' identity, although Peter's understanding is still growing. This is the first time Jesus has raised the question himself. Their understanding of Jesus' identity is crucial as he now explains the true nature of his Messiahship (vv 31ff)

Question 6

Read verses 34-38. What does it mean to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus?

Giving up our own individual agendas, desires and plans, placing Jesus as ruler of our lives and before all other priorities, giving up nationalistic and religious agendas and what we might want or like Jesus to be as Messiah and in our lives.

MAKING IT STICK

In what ways has God taught you spiritual things through physical or material means?

What is Jesus as Messiah to you? How does this unfold in your day to day life?

What makes it difficult to take up your cross and follow him?

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Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 8:27-36

PETER'S DECLARATION ABOUT JESUS

²⁷Jesus and his disciples went out into the villages of Caesarea Philippi and on the road, he asked his disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say I am?" ²⁸Some replied to him by saying, "John the Baptist." Others, "Elijah" And still others, that he was one of the prophets. ²⁹But he asked them, "Who do you say I am?" In reply Peter said, "You are the Christ." ³⁰Jesus then ordered them not to speak to anyone about him.

JESUS FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

³¹And Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man is bound to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and scribes, and be put to death, and after three days, "get up again". ³²He spoke his message plainly, but Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But Jesus turned around, looked at his disciples and rebuked Peter. He said, "Get behind me Satan! For you do not have in mind the things of God but the things of people." ³⁴Jesus then summoned the crowd along with his disciples and said to them, "If anyone wants to follow behind me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross and let him follow me! ³⁵For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

WEEK SEVEN

Chapter 9 follows the disciples true yet misdirected declaration that Jesus is the Messiah. This is a key turning point in the story.

In chapter 9 we see the story slowing down. as Jesus heads toward Jerusalem and his self predicted death (8:31)

Chapter 9 continues onwards with five sections. The first being The Transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a mountain where he is transfigured in front of the three disciples. God speaks directly to Peter, James and John, up on the mountain and on the way down Jesus instructs his disciples not to tell anyone of what they had just seen. **(9:2-12)**

After coming down from the mountain, Jesus, Peter, James and John come to the other disciples who are surrounded by the teachers of the law. A man had brought his son who was possessed by a spirit to the disciples so that they may exorcise it but they are unable to do it. Jesus sees the crowd approaching and exorcises the spirit and in private after the event, the disciples ask Jesus why they couldn't remove the spirit. **(9:14-29)**

Jesus and the disciples continue on their journey and pass through Galilee. Jesus then predicted his death a second time to his disciples, but the disciples were confused and afraid to ask Jesus about what He had said. Mark then has a conversation wherein Jesus speaks directly with his disciples which leads into 3 teaching moments. **(9:30-34)**

In the first moment, Jesus teaches on servanthood (both in regards to Himself and His disciples). In the second, Jesus teaches on humility (his disciples should be welcoming to everyone - and outworking of humility) and in the third, Jesus adds to humility but in a different aspect (the inward effect of humility - rebuking the disciples' love of status). **(9:35-41)**

After these moments of teaching, Jesus instructs his disciples to remain focussed and faithful. **(9:42-50)**

Question 1

In verse 7 what does the statement "This is my Son, Whom I love. Listen to Him," contribute to the understanding of Mark's story?

Knowing this, what does it make concrete that we already know about Jesus?

Listening seems to be a key theme up to this point in Mark's Gospel. Jesus is very clear when he says before he speaks "whoever has ears to hear, let them hear". This hearing is partnered with understanding (4:9-13, 7:14). Mark's story is all about the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God Mark 1:1, a message that is heard. Jesus is telling his disciples that HE IS THE MESSIAH. To make this clearer, Mark includes the transfiguration account so we can hear God say "This is my Son." This "Son" is also the prophet whom Moses said that God promised to send Israel to whom they were to listen (Deut 18:15). Notice that Moses is also present at the Transfiguration. Also Psalm 2:7 may in view here.

Question 2

Read 9:14-29. In verse 24 the father of the possessed boy asks something profound of Jesus in response to what Jesus says in verse 23. What do you think the man in the story is asking for? What does it teach us about belief? How does this relate to what Jesus says in verse 29?

The man seems to be responding in a way that would mean simply that his son is healed, a kind of "I will do whatever you want just heal the boy" attitude.

For the second question you are looking for peoples' views on this and what it means for them. Maybe you could talk about belief and its commonality to human beings and the kind of things they believe.

Maybe ask what it says about prayer? Do you have difficulty praying without really believing for an answer? Do we pray without risk or belief that God can and will answer? Perhaps we keep our prayers shallow due to our lack of belief?

Question 3

Read Mark 9:30-37. This is the second time in as many chapters that Jesus has talked about his death and resurrection. Why did Jesus want to teach his disciples in private (verses 30-31 a)? Why is this important to Mark's story?

Mark again is carrying this idea of the Messianic secret. Jesus was concealing his full identity until he had fulfilled his work on the cross. It is important to Mark's story because the good news of the son of God is fully realised at the cross, which is where Mark is taking us and what he is focussed on. This is the place we ought to come back to in our Christian walk in our joys and difficulties.

Question 4

The disciples have a discussion about who was the greatest, in stark contrast to what Jesus said in verse 31. What do we learn about God's view of greatness? What surprises you about this? Can you think of a time when it is hard to follow Jesus' view of greatness?

We learn that God's view of greatness is found in servanthood. This is contrary to a secular worldview which is about the glorification of the self.

Verses 36-37 teach us the importance of leading people to Jesus so they might follow him. We come to him with the posture of a child, that is, dependence, trust, belief, helplessness. All these things we have been witnessing through this chapter.

Question 5

Read Mark 9:38-50. Compare the difference in attitude between John in verse 38 and Jesus in verse 41. How does this add to where Mark's story is trying to take us? What is the reason for giving someone a "cup of water"?

It is interesting that this incident happens on the coat tails of Mark telling about how the disciples could not help a man's son in verses 14-29. The contrast is that the disciples were seeking the miracles and the big things but Jesus teaches them in verse 41 that service to others because we believe in him is what we ought to be seeking. Being one of them is about serving. Even if you do not do miracles your service is equally important in the eyes of God. Perhaps you can ask people if there was a time or in what circumstances people seek the spectacular over the mundane? The reason we give someone a cup of water is because we belong to Jesus. We do not need to expect anything in return as Jesus has done so much for us

Question 6

Read Mark 9:42-50. What do you think Jesus is asking of his followers in these verses? What makes it difficult to follow in this way?

Jesus is asking us to stay focussed and faithful in these verses. He uses hyperbole to get his point across to stress the importance and seriousness of what he is saying. In verse 42 Jesus defines who is talking about in verse 37 as those who believe in him in verse 42

MAKING IT STICK

In what ways in your life do you see the glory of Jesus?

In what ways do you aim to glorify Jesus?

What can we do to remain faithful as followers/disciples of Jesus?

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Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 9:30-37

JESUS AGAIN FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

³⁰After leaving that place they travelled on through the region of Galilee and Jesus did not want anyone to recognize him, ³¹for he had been teaching his disciples and telling them that the Son of Man is going to be given over into the hands of men. They will kill him and once dead, after three days, he will be lifted up!

³²But they didn't understand his meaning and were afraid to ask.

WHO IS THE GREATEST?

³³They then came to Capernaum and when they were at home he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" ³⁴They were silent, for on the road they had argued with each other about who was the greatest. ³⁵Jesus sat down and called for the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone wants to be first, he will be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶He then took a child and stood it before them. He put his arm around the child and said to them, ³⁷"Anyone who welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me. And anyone who welcomes me, welcomes not me but he who sent me."



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

WEEK EIGHT

"The material in chapter 10 is set in Jesus' journey through Judea. In addition to bringing Jesus and the disciples to Jerusalem, the journey also symbolizes the theme of discipleship. As Jesus nears Jerusalem, his teaching about his mission and the claims of discipleship becomes increasingly specific. Chapter 10 begins with the call to discipleship in the fundamental aspects of life - marriage (vv 1-12), children (vv 13-16), and possessions (vv. 17-34). For a third time Jesus foretells his death and resurrection; and like his teaching on discipleship itself, the prediction is the most explicit yet (vv.32-34). For the first time Jesus declares the servant-role of the Son of Man 'not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (v.45). Mark concludes the chapter with the healing of Bartimaeus, whose trust in Jesus for the recovery of his sight and following of Jesus 'on the way' to Jerusalem represent the quintessence of discipleship (v.52)."

-Mark commentary by James R Edwards p297.

With all this in mind, a blind man calls on Jesus to heal him – he wants to see. Healed, able to see the Jesus who Mark has been presenting, he immediately follows Jesus on the way ... to Jerusalem (11:1)! He is one who obeys the will of God. He is called "my brother".

Question 1

Read Mark 10:1-12. In these few verses Jesus' teaching encompasses a few things. What are the things that Jesus teaches? What is it about these verses that reflects God's character and our life as a disciple of Jesus?

From these verses Jesus touches on topics such as divorce, marriage, gender, creation, law. There may be others that people come up with. It is, however, important to remember that you cannot develop a full theological position from these verses. They certainly can contribute to our understanding though. The thing about God's character that is most prevalent is faithfulness. This is seen in marriage. When Jesus quotes the OT and says, "Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate," he is not just talking about those outside the marriage relationship but those in it. We see this in God himself through his faithfulness to his people despite the description of them in Hosea 1-3, or Amos. It must also be understood that divorce is recognised by God and is a large topic in itself.

Please be sensitive to those in your group who may have been through a marriage break up. There is no placing blame, be careful not to shame or place unjustified guilt on someone. We need to love and support people who have been through this (or whose spouse is not a believer) because it brings about pain and loss. There are many reasons for divorce and we certainly do not expect anyone to remain in a relationship where they are not safe and they cannot thrive. Please control this part of the study with care and empathy. If you feel the discussion is going in an unhelpful direction step in.

Question 2

Read 10:13-31. What things stand out to you about Jesus in these verses?

Jesus recognises the vulnerable (children). Jesus picks up on being called "good." Why do you think he does this? Jesus did not despise or get angry at him instead he loves him or has compassion on him (verse 21). Perhaps you could ask people what they have given up to follow Jesus (verses 26-31)? Or what do people find hard to give up these days?

Question 3

Read Mark 9:30-37. How do these stories complement each other? What do you think verse 31 means?

These two stories seem to be linked. The story of the children is explained somewhat in the story of the rich man. Verse 31 is a summary of these two stories.

Question 4

Read 10:32-34. Why do you think Jesus pulls his disciples aside to tell them a third time about his imminent death? What is different this time to other times (8:31-32 and 9:30-32)?

This is the point of Mark's story. Perhaps you could ask why the details get more specific.

Question 5

Read Mark 10:35-45. Compare these verses with 9:33-37. What have the disciples not learned? How do you feel when you read verses like this? How can we be like the disciples?

Question 6

Read Mark 10:46-52. In what ways do these verses contribute to what we know about Jesus through what he did? How do they contribute to what we have read Jesus taught since the start of Mark's story?

These verses show us again the authority Jesus has over sickness and pain. He has the power to transform even the physical. Jesus has taught that people need to hear and see and believe the good news so they might enter the kingdom. Physical healing does not bring anyone into the kingdom only seeing the king as he is and believing in him. Jesus has been teaching people what they need to see.

MAKING IT STICK

What have you given up to follow Jesus?
What do you find difficult to give up?

Can you remember a time when your
eyes were opened to the truth of Jesus
or some aspect of who Jesus is?

What can we do to remain faithful as
followers/disciples of Jesus?

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MARK 10:32-45

A THIRD TIME JESUS FORETELLS HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION

³²They were now on the road travelling up to Jerusalem. Jesus was going on ahead of them. The people were amazed but those who followed him were afraid. Taking again the twelve he began to tell them what was going to happen to him. ³³“Look! We are going up to Jerusalem and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes. They will sentence him to death and hand him over to the gentiles. ³⁴They will mock him, spit on him, whip him and kill him. And after three days, he will be lifted up!”

THE REQUEST OF JAMES AND JOHN

³⁵James and John, the Sons of Zebedee came up to Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want you to do what we ask.” ³⁶He said to them, “What is it that you want me to do?” ³⁷They replied, “Allow for one of us to sit at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory!” ³⁸But Jesus replied to them, “You don’t know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink or receive the baptism with which I am baptised?” ³⁹But they affirmed, “Yes, we are able!” But Jesus said, “Indeed, you will drink from the cup I drink from and receive the baptism with which I am baptised ⁴⁰but to sit at my right hand or my left is not for me to grant but for those it is prepared.” ⁴¹When the other ten heard what was asked they started to become angry at James and John. ⁴²But Jesus summoned them and said, “You know that those who presume to rule over the gentiles lord it over them and that their leaders exercise their authority over them, ⁴³but this is not to be so among you. Rather, whoever wants to be great among you will be your servant and ⁴⁴whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. ⁴⁵In fact, the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.”



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

WEEK NINE

In these chapters of Mark the story slows somewhat. In fact, the last few chapters are set in the context of Easter week. Given the disproportionate emphasis on this short time the importance of these events ought not be understated.

Chapter 11 deals with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, Jesus' destination as stated by him in 10:33. The subsequent cleansing or reordering of the temple ensues and some other questions of identity (11:9-11) and authority (11:27-33).

In chapter 12 Jesus does more teaching but this time in Jerusalem. He comes on to the turf of those we met in Mark 7 and Mark 10. This is coupled with the inclusion of the Sadducees asking about the resurrection which Jesus predicted would happen to him.

Jesus finishes his teaching by baffling the Teachers of the Law with his question about identity quoting from Psalm 110:1. A similar question is asked of the disciples in Mark 8:27-30.

In these verses we see the restoration of the temple in Jerusalem which points to restoration on a cosmic level. The example of the widow's offering in Mark 12:41-44 is a display of what it is like to be in God's temple, what it is like to be those who are his disciples. It is not merely the amount we bring but our willingness to be generous with what we have been given. She denies herself and takes up her cross.

Question 1

Read Mark 11:1-11. What do we learn about Jesus from these verses and why is it significant?

Particularly looking at verses 11:9-11. Perhaps you could look up Psalm 118 and think through why such a quote is used by the people for Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Why was a return to David's kingdom so important? David was promised that his descendants would sit on the throne forever (2 Samuel 7). This is the kind of triumphal scenario the people were hoping for. Perhaps also looking for a return to occupying the inheritance that God had promised his people. It was not about taking over the Roman empire but occupying the land promised to them under God's rule. This is a little ironic as their lack of obedience meant it was taken from them in the first place, what would be different? Do we seek a return to the good old days rather than a transformation of the present?

Question 2

Read 11:12-26. In these verses there is a kind of sandwich. There is part of the story where Jesus curses a fig tree and then he clears the temple and then they return to the tree. Why do you think these stories are linked together? What do we learn from this?

This is called a Markan sandwich. It is a device used by the story to draw things together. Perhaps you could look at Isaiah 34:4, Jer 29:17, Hos 2:12. These passages speak of judgement upon Israel and relate it to a fig tree. According to Edwards in his commentary on Mark when referring to Mark's statement 'because it was not the season for figs,' he says, "It is better simply to distinguish between mature figs and early or unripe figs." The end of v13 might be paraphrased, 'It was, of course, not the season for figs, but it was the season for early or unripe figs' (page 340).

Jesus purges traders from the court of the Gentiles where trading was going on. Verse 16 refers to Jesus stopping the flow of sacrifices and thus impeding the temple sacrificial cult in yet another way, which is entirely consistent with the context of vv15-16.

Verses 17-19, there was an expectation that the Messiah would purge Jerusalem and the temple of Gentiles when in fact he is doing the opposite. He clears the way for Gentiles.

“The temple and covenant are not reserved exclusively for Israel but include ‘all nations’ ... The temple is not the sole property of Israel but a witness to the nations the place where anyone ‘who loves the name of the Lord may worship him (Is 56:6), a place where God ‘will gather still others’ (Is 56:8) Edwards p 343.

Verse 20-21 indicate that there will be no harvest from the temple. “Mark’s following the fig tree - temple sandwich with a call to faith signifies that Jesus, and not the temple, is the object of faith.” Edwards p347. This follows from Mark 1:1.

Question 3

Mark 11:27-12:12. What does Jesus’ interaction with the chief priests and the parable of the tenants teach us about Jesus? Why do you think they respond the way they do in 12:12? What are some reasons we might reject Jesus or what he teaches?

Question 4

Mark 11:27-12:44. What is the theme/s in these verses? Why do think they are important leading up to Jesus’ arrest?

There are themes around Jesus’ authority, generosity, rejection of the Messiah (12:1-12), theology of resurrection (pointing ahead to Jesus’ own resurrection), and who the Messiah is (12:35-37). There are probably more.

Question 5

Read Mark 12:35-37. Why do the people respond with delight in verse 37? Are there things that Jesus teaches that you would say it is difficult to delight in and why?

Their delight comes not from just what is said in verses 25 following but perhaps from the beginning of chapter 12 or maybe even since the beginning of Mark when we are told they were amazed at this teaching (1:22). Jesus is warmly welcomed by the crowds in 11:8-10, in contrast to the ongoing opposition and questioning by the religious leaders, but later the crowds will also turn against him (15:6-15).

Question 6

Read Mark 12:38-44. The story of the widow giving all she had has Jesus sitting opposite where offerings were being put in. This part of the story follows the clearing of the temple by Jesus in Mark 11:12-25 and the teaching in between. How do you think this story helps our understanding of chapters 11-12?

It connects with the themes of wholehearted faith in prayer (11:22-25), how we respond to God (12:1-12), the greatest commandment (12:28-34) and stands in contrast to the pride of the religious leaders (12:38-40).

MAKING IT STICK

Can you remember and share times when you have questioned the authority of Jesus?

In what areas of your life do you find it hard to love God wholeheartedly?

Do you find it hard to love others as you love yourself? Why? How can people in your group be praying for you in this?

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Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 12:1-12, 28-34

THE PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD AND THE TENANTS

Jesus then began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard. He placed a fence around it, dug a trench and built a tower. He then rented it out to farmers and went away. ²He sent a servant to the farmers at harvest time to take from the farmers the fruit of the vineyard. ³But the farmers took him, beat him up and sent him away empty handed. ⁴Again, he sent another servant to them and they knocked him out and treated him shamefully. ⁵And he sent to them another servant and that one they killed, and many other servants whom they’d either beat up or kill. ⁶The man had still one to send, his beloved son. He sent him last of all to them assuming, “They will respect my son.” ⁷But those farmers said to themselves, “This is the heir! Come, let’s kill him! ⁸So, they took him, killed him and cast him out of the vineyard. ⁹What will the Lord of the vineyard do? He will come, and he will destroy those farmers and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰Have you not read the Scripture? ‘The stone that the builders have rejected, has become the capstone. ¹¹This is of the Lord and it is marvelous in our eyes.’” ¹²The people tried to arrest Jesus, but they were afraid of the crowd. For they knew that he spoke the parable against them. But they let him go and went away.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

²⁸One of the Scribes approached Jesus after listening to those questioning him. When he saw that Jesus had answered them well he asked him, “Which is the most important commandment?” ²⁹Jesus answered, “The most important is this, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰You shall love the Lord our God with your whole heart, with your whole life, with your whole mind and with all of your strength.’ ³¹The second is this, ‘You will love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than this.” ³²And the scribe said to him, “Well said, teacher, it’s true that there is one God and no other beside him. ³³And to love him with your whole heart, with all your intelligence and with all your strength and to love your neighbour as yourself, is far more important than every burnt offering and sacrifice.” ³⁴When Jesus saw that he replied with understanding, he said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And nobody dared to question him any further.



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

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WEEK TEN

Mark 13 is a very challenging piece of scripture. From its stark pictures of calamities, persecution and division coupled with trying to place events within history we challenged to live as disciples of Jesus as we become citizens of the kingdom of God when we repent and believe the good news.

In his commentary on Mark, James R. Edwards helpfully says when referring to Mark 13:37 to watch, "This admonition... indicates that the purpose of the eschatological discourse in Mark 13 is not primary to provide a timeline or blueprint for the future so much as to exhort readers to faithful discipleship in the present."

Question 1

Read Mark 12:1-3. Mark gives us the detail of Jesus leaving the temple and then sitting opposite the temple. Why is this significant as part of the story and also spiritually/theologically?

Jesus (representing God?) leaves the temple for the last time in verse 1. Perhaps it is significant that Jesus LEAVES the temple. He sits on the mount of Olives opposite the temple and looks back and speaks of its destruction. No more sacrifices, no more temple injustices performed by the priests or trading. The destruction of the temple no longer has a bearing on God's work of salvation because Jesus becomes that temple, his people make up that temple. Sitting on the Mount of Olives perhaps shows Jesus distancing himself from this particular temple now. This determines the direction of Jesus discourse toward the temple and the importance of discipleship centred on Jesus not the temple.?

Question 2

In these verses Jesus says "watch out" and "be on your guard" (verses 5, 9, 23, 33, 35, 37). How does this help our understanding of this discourse?

Jesus is saying these things to prepare them for what is to come and what it is to be a disciple of Jesus in the present. What people see going on around them is not unusual or unexpected but things that must be endured even as God's people. It is not because we have done something wrong that God adds things to our load but that he is with us as we navigate these things. It is a normal part of life while we wait for the return of the king.

Question 3

Mark 13:5-7. In what ways do we see deception (people saying 'I am he') now? From verses 7-8, why do you think people conclude these things speak of the absence of God? How would you answer such scepticism?

Question 4

Mark 13:9-13. On what basis does persecution and division occur? Why do you think this is the case?

In verse 9 Jesus says “on account of me” and in verse 13 “because of me.” Perhaps you could ask what is it about Jesus that causes division or persecution? Is being faithful to Jesus worth enduring such things because of him? God has not held anything back or tried to present an easy road for those in the kingdom. It is also important to remember that he does not abandon us during such times.

Question 5

Read Mark 13:14-25. Daniel 9:25-27 the abomination that causes desolation is prophesied. What other events in the Daniel verses are associated with this event? How are the Daniel verses similar to Mark 13:14-25? Why does such a prophecy give us confidence in the death and resurrection of Jesus?

The death of the Anointed One. An end to sacrifice and offering. The temple is not the means to salvation. Jesus is where we find rest and salvation. His sacrifice is forever and sure. We have assurance of what we hope for because the abomination that causes desolation is answered with the grace and mercy of God in his son (his anointed).

Question 6

Read Mark 13:32-36. What is to be our response to such calamity and this prophecy? How do we do this?

Watch, be alert, be on your guard. We live lives of repentance. Speak the truth (verses 10-11). Deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him.

MAKING IT STICK

When do you find it most difficult to be on your guard?

How do you discern what is the truth amongst those who proclaim a false gospel?

What is your greatest difficulty in persevering while waiting for the return of Jesus?

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Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 13

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE FORETOLD AND THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

As Jesus was walking out of the temple one of his disciples said to him, “Teacher look at how great the stones are and how great the houses are!” ²But Jesus said to him, “You see these great houses? Not a stone here shall be left on another which has not first been torn down.” ³While he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴“Tell us, when will these things happen and what sign will there be for when all these are going to be accomplished?” ⁵Jesus began to tell them, “Watch out that no one leads you astray. ⁶Many will come in my name saying, “I am he” and many they will lead astray. ⁷But when you hear of wars and the rumour of wars, don’t be alarmed. It must happen, but the end is yet to come. ⁸For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. In some places there will be earthquakes, there will be famines. These are the beginning of birth pains. ⁹But watch out for yourselves! They will hand you over to the council and beat you in the synagogues. You will stand before rulers and kings for my sake as a testimony against them ¹⁰but to all nations the gospel must first be proclaimed. ¹¹When they hand you over, don’t worry beforehand about what you should say. Rather, whatever is given to you at that hour, say that. For you will not be the ones speaking, but the Holy Spirit. ¹²Brother will betray brother to death, and father his child. ¹³You will be hated by all on account of my name but the one who endures to the end will be saved. ¹⁴But when you see the abomination that causes desolation standing where he shouldn’t, let the reader understand, at that very moment, let those in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵Let not the man on his housetop come down, nor let him go back inside to take something from his house. ¹⁶And let not the man in his field turn back to get his cloak. ⁷Woe to those who are pregnant in those days and nursing children! ¹⁸Pray that it doesn’t happen during winter. ¹⁹For those days will be a calamity of a sort that has not happened since the beginning of God’s creation until now – and will never happen again.



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Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 13 (CONT.)

²⁰If the Lord had not cut short those days no man will be saved. However, for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has cut short the days. ²¹Whenever someone says, "Look! Here is the Christ! Look! There he is!" Do not believe him. ²²For false messiahs and false prophets will rise and perform signs and wonders to lead – if possible - the elect astray. ²³But watch out! I have told you everything ahead of time. ²⁴But in those days, after that calamity, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give off its light. ²⁵The stars will fall from heaven and the powers in heaven will be shaken. ²⁶Then, with great power and glory they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven! ²⁷He will then send forth his angels and gather together his elect from the four winds, from the depths of the earth, to the summit of heaven. ²⁸But learn this parable from the fig tree. When its branch is tender, and it sprouts forth leaves, you know that the harvest is near. ²⁹In the same way know, that when you see these things come to pass the time is near for the harvest. ³⁰I tell you the truth! This generation will not pass away until all these things happen. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away! ³²But about that day or that hour, nobody knows. Not even the angels in heaven nor the Son. Only the Father. ³³Watch out! Stay awake! For you do not know when that time will come. ³⁴Like a man who goes on a journey and leaves his house behind, granting oversight to his servants, assigning a task to each and commanding the door keeper to keep watch... ³⁵Be on your guard, therefore! For you do not know when the lord of the house comes! Whether it be evening, in the middle of the night or morning! ³⁶Lest he comes and finds you sleeping at that very moment! ³⁷What I say to you, I say to all...be on your guard!"



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

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WEEK ELEVEN

These two chapters make up what is known as the Passion. Passion comes from a Latin word for 'suffering' or 'enduring.' This includes the betrayal, arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus.

Edwards, in his commentary, states that "the presence of three sandwich conventions in chap. 14 and one in chap. 15 are evidence that Mark is not simply transmitting tradition but is also interpreting it for his purposes." p410.

There are a couple of things worth noting in this part of Mark's story:

"The narrator leads the reader to see in the crucifixion the ultimate paradox of God's rule, that the anointed one is king precisely because he was willing to live for others even when it meant this humiliating outcome. Only when Jesus has 'died like this' does the narrator allow a human character in the story acknowledge Jesus a "son of God." Mark as Story by David Rhoads p115.

"There is no intention to exploit the savagery of crucifixion either to sensationalise Jesus' death or to evoke sentimentality from the reader. Especially in Mark the accent on the crucifixion narrative falls not on its brutality and cruelty but on the shame and mockery to which Jesus is subjected. As in the prayer of Gethsemane, so, too, at the crucifixion, the inner sufferings supersede the physical horror."

Do we feel this way about our Father? Does our will line up with Jesus will to obey the Father, does our faithfulness fall in line with Jesus faithfulness to see the will of the Father done?

The reader is lead through Jesus' early preparation for burial (14:8), to the last supper, Gethsemane, the trials and the crucifixion.

Question 1

Read Mark 14:1-11. In this section Mark starts and ends with a plot to arrest and kill Jesus. In the middle we are diverted to Jesus' anointing. What do you learn from this "Markan sandwich" about Jesus' imminent death?

Mark uses these three part stories to make a point. The middle section provides the key to understanding the story or lesson. "The bracketing of the devotion of the woman, who remains an unnamed outsider, by the betrayal plot of an ultimate insider. creates an acid contrast between faith and treachery. The costly unguent of the woman is an exemplary sacrifice of faith, whereas the plot of Judas to betray the master for a sum of money is a sacrifice of faith in the opposite and worst sense of the term." Edwards p411.

Question 2

Mark 14:12-26. What stands out to you in these verses? What do you make of the disciples response in verse 19 to Jesus' betrayal announcement?

It is worth noting that it is the time of passover. The time of sacrificing a lamb which Jesus himself is about to become. This is how he would serve them (Mark 10:45). The disciples response is immediately to deny it is them. Is this something that we are quick to do? In what ways do we deny we have done wrong and why do we do it? We compare ourselves to others rather than recognising God's standard.

Question 3

Mark 14. In this chapter Peter and Judas play prominent roles. How are they similar and how are they different?

Question 4

Mark 15:1-20. What is Pilate's attitude toward Jesus? What is the soldier's attitude toward Jesus? Why do think they have these attitudes toward him?

Question 5

Mark 15:21-39. In what ways is Jesus shamed and mocked in these verses? Why do you think Mark gives such detail and so little about the actual crucifixion itself?

Mark is not intending the focus to be on the brutality of the execution but on the anguish and shame coupled with the rejection of the Father. He wants us to see Jesus' faithfulness even at the hands of his executioners and his submission to the will of God.

Question 6

Mark 15:33-39. What is significant about the tearing of the curtain in the temple?

This spells the end of the temple, the priesthood and the sacrificial system. God has come close as Jesus pays for sin and satisfies the wrath of God. Jesus has endured the cross and his disciples need to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him.

MAKING IT STICK

What do you find most difficult about persevering as a disciple of Jesus?

What things about the Passion of Jesus bring you comfort?

What is difficult about holding the tension of Jesus' death at the hands of humans and his submission to the will of God?

THE MARK 121 PROJECT

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Something that is new or interesting to you



Any questions you have from the passage



Repeated words, key ideas or a key verse

MARK 14:32-42

THE PRAYER IN GETHSEMANE

³²They came to a place by the name of Gethsemane and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³He took Peter, James and John with him and began to be terribly distressed and worried. ³⁴He said to them, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch.” ³⁵Having withdrawn a little further he fell to the ground and began praying for the hour to pass from him if possible. ³⁶And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me! But not what I will but what you do.” ³⁷Jesus then went and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Are you not strong enough to keep watch for one hour? ³⁸Keep watch and pray that you may not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” ³⁹After speaking, Jesus again went away and prayed the same prayer. ⁴⁰But again, Jesus returned and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy and drooping and they did not know what to say. ⁴¹He came a third time and said to them, “Have you really been sleeping and resting all this time? Enough! The hour has come! The Son of Man is being handed over into the hands of sinful men. ⁴²Get up, let’s go! Look! The one to betray me is near.”



Who is Jesus?



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MARK 15:1-20

JESUS BEFORE PILATE

Early in the morning, the chief priests immediately took council with the elders and the scribes and having bound the Sanhedrin with an oath, they led Jesus away and handed him over to Pilate. ²Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replied and said to him, “You say so.” ³The chief priests began laying many accusations against him ⁴but Pilate asked him again, saying, “Do you have no reply? See how many accusations they bring against you!” ⁵But, to the amazement of Pilate, Jesus made no reply.

JESUS SENTENCED TO DEATH

⁶Now during the Passover feast Pilate would release to them one of the prisoners they asked for. ⁷Imprisoned along with the revolutionaries was a man named Barabbas who committed murder during the uprising. ⁸The crowd then arose and began asking for Pilate to do for them what he was accustomed to. ⁹But Pilate replied with the words, “Would you like for me to release the King of the Jews for you?” ¹⁰For he knew that it was out of envy that the chief priest had handed him over. ¹¹But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that he would be more likely to hand Barabbas over to them. ¹²But Pilate again replied and said to them, “So then, what shall I do to the King of the Jews?” ¹³They cried out again, “Crucify him!” ¹⁴But Pilate said to them, “Why? What crime has he committed?” But they cried out all the more! “Crucify him!” ¹⁵Pilate then, wishing to do what was enough for the crowd, released Barabbas to them and after having him flogged, handed Jesus over for him to be crucified.

THE SOLDIERS MOCK JESUS

¹⁶Now the soldiers led Jesus away into the courtyard, that is, the Praetorium, and called together the whole company of soldiers. ¹⁷They wrapped him in purple and placed a twisted crown of thorns around his head. ¹⁸They then began to salute him, “Greetings! King of the Jews!” ¹⁹They struck his head with a reed and spat on him. They would position their knees and bow before him. ²⁰And once they had their fun with him they stripped him of his purple linen and dressed him in his clothes. They then led him out for them to crucify him.



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MARK 15:21-41

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

²¹They forced a certain passerby named Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexandros and Rufus, as he was coming from his field, to carry Jesus' cross. ²²They then led him to the place of Golgotha, which means, the place of the Skull. ²³They then gave him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴They then crucified him and divided up his clothes by casting lots to see who got what. ²⁵It was now the third hour and they crucified him. ²⁶There was an inscription of the charge which read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷With him they crucified two criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ²⁸Those passing by insulted him. They shook their heads and said, ²⁹"Ooah! The destroyer of the temple! And the one to build it again in three days!" ³⁰Save yourself by coming down from the cross!" ³¹Likewise, the chief priests along with the scribes chuckled amongst themselves and said, "Others he saved, himself he can't save. ³²Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now so that we can see and believe in him." Even those crucified with Jesus heaped insult upon him.

THE DEATH OF JESUS

³³When the sixth hour came, darkness fell over the whole earth until the ninth hour. ³⁴At the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi! Eloi! Lema Sabachthani" Which means, my God, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" ³⁵Some of those standing by heard him and said, "Look! He is calling Elijah." ³⁶Someone ran and soaked a sponge with sour wine. They put it on a reed and gave it to Jesus to drink, saying, "Leave him, let us see if Elijah comes to take him down." ³⁷But Jesus let out a great cry and exhaled. ³⁸The curtain of the temple tore in two from top to bottom ³⁹and when the centurion standing opposite saw that he had breathed his last he said "Truly, this man was the Son of God." ⁴⁰Now there were some women watching from afar, among whom was Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Lesser and Justus and Salome. ⁴¹These were the women who followed him while he was in Galilee and ministered to him. And there were many other women who had come up into Jerusalem.



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

MARK 15:40-16:8

(Page 79 of The Gospel of Mark)

WEEK TWELVE

These last verses in Mark's story are a witness to the burial and subsequent resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God. There is another three part story to conclude Mark's story. There are the women who were watching from a distance and this time they are named. This is followed by Joseph of Arimathea asking for the body of Jesus and then a return to the women who return to the site of Jesus's burial as first witnesses to the empty tomb.

In the verses there is an interesting contrast of fear and faith. The fear of the women at witnessing something so extraordinary and the faith of Joseph asking for the body of Jesus.

For the original readers of Mark, who were most likely under persecution and maybe even doubted what they believe, this rounds off the story reminding them of whom it is they believe in, who they are disciples of and to persevere. Mark is encouraging them to remember who Jesus is and what he came to do even through what he had to endure.

The end of Mark's story finishes in an odd way with the women not saying anything to anyone because they were afraid. This silence is a theme we have seen through the book of Mark but we know is broken at Pentecost when Jesus ascends and the Spirit is poured out.

Question 1

Read Mark 15:40-16:8. In verses 40-41 Mark names several women who have been with Jesus through his ministry. Why do you think they are named here (in contrast to the woman in 14:1-11)?

These women are named firstly perhaps so that they can be identified as witnesses to the death and resurrection of Jesus. This is unusual given the credibility of a woman's testimony at this time was not worth anything. This however adds weight to its inclusion. Why have women as witnesses to prove a story if their testimony is not valued unless of course it is true

Question 2

What do we learn about being a disciple of Jesus from these women?

These women who "followed and cared for his needs" teach us that discipleship requires faithfulness but not notoriety. To serve as Jesus Jesus served is a privilege and brings glory to his name. To have an identity nestled in the service of Jesus is fulfilling and eternal. My worth is not wrapped up in my goodness or ability but in the loving arms of our Saviour.

Question 3

In verse 43 what do you think it means that Joseph of Arimathea was "himself waiting for the kingdom of God to come"?

Perhaps Mark wants us to know that he was "more than a pious Jew awaiting fulfilment of the messianic hope." Edwards p 488. Could it also show that Jesus' death is both for the Jew and the gentile as we see the act of Joseph and the confession of the centurion (15:39).

Question 4

How do verses 44-45 of Mark 15 contribute to the credible witness of the resurrection?

Pilate followed protocol to make sure Jesus was dead. You would not want people taken off crosses that were not dead. This adds to the proof that Jesus was in fact dead. No death, no resurrection. Witnesses were not confined to those close to Jesus or even his countrymen.

Question 5

Mark 16:6-7. Jesus' resurrection is confirmed both by his absence from the tomb and seeing him in person. What parallels do you notice between the story in Mark 10:46-52 and these verses in chapter 16?

The idea of sight and of following. Bartimaeus followed Jesus along the road and the women were instructed to go to Galilee where they would follow and see him. This is a theme Mark has used time and again through his story. To see Jesus and follow him.

Question 6

Mark 16:8. What is striking about the way Mark's story ends? Is it what you would expect? Why or why not?

MAKING IT STICK

Why is being a disciple of Jesus important to you?

What can you do this week to firm up your belief in Jesus?

What things obstruct or hinder following Jesus each day?

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MARK 15:42-16:8

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

⁴²As evening approached on the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, ⁴³Joseph of Arimathea, a respectable member of the council, who himself was also waiting for the Kingdom of God, came forward. Boldly he entered the presence of Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴Pilate was amazed to find out that he had already died. He summoned the centurion and asked him if he had been dead for long. ⁴⁵Having found out from the centurion the exact time of death, he then gave the corpse to Joseph. ⁴⁶So, Joseph purchased a cloth, took him down, wrapped him in the cloth and placed him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock. They then rolled a stone over the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Justus saw where he lay.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Once the Sabbath had passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome purchased spices to go and anoint him. ²On the first day of the week at sunrise they came to the tomb. ³They said to each other, "Who will roll away the stone from the entrance of the tomb for us?" ⁴But when they looked up they were amazed to see that the stone was rolled away for it was very large. ⁵Entering the tomb, they saw a young man seated on the right wearing a white cloak and they were terrified. ⁶He said to them, "Do not be afraid! You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, the one who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. Look, the place where they laid him! ⁷But go! Tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of them into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." ⁸The women then exited and fled from the tomb! Fear and utter shock overtook them, and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid.



Who is Jesus?



Why did he come?



What does this mean for us?

APPENDIX

**ONE TO ONE
DISCIPLESHIP**

**MINI TRAINING
SERIES**

SESSION 1

THE WHO, WHAT, WHY OF ONE-TO-ONE DISCIPLESHIP

Vision

Let me begin by painting a picture of us here at St Paul's. I want to see older women meeting with younger women to talk to them about life and the lessons they've learned and the things God has taught them. I want to see young mums meeting with young women who are just married or just thinking about having a baby, to talk to them about what it's like to follow Jesus when all of that is going on. I want to see men meeting together and being honest and open with each other in a way that Christian men seem especially able to do, and which the rest of men in society desperately need. I want to see the boundaries between the age groups at this church broken down, because young women are meeting with older women, and older women are meeting with younger women, and experienced mothers and fathers are meeting with new mums and dads, and men are reading the Bible together. This is the way in which our church can develop meaningful gospel relationships, caring for each other during the week, sharing our lives and our experiences, and making sure that this church is filled with people who really do love and know one another. And I want each of you to be a part of that. You might be sitting there thinking, but I don't feel qualified to do this and I want to assure you that you are. If you love Jesus, and you have experience of what is to live as a Christian, then your very experiences that you think are ordinary will be the very things that another person needs to hear, that's how God uses our ordinary stories to grow his kingdom.

1. Why disciple 1:1?

There are four main reasons we ought to be involved in one-to-one discipleship (this list is not exhaustive).

I. It is biblical

Jesus did it. While Jesus taught to large crowds and had many disciples (including the 72 and the women), he also had a smaller group of twelve and an even smaller "inner core" of three - Peter, James and John (Mark 9:2; 14:33; Matt. 5:37; 17:1-2; 26:37) and he also related to Peter one-to-one.

Paul did it. He disciplined Timothy and, not only that, but sent him out to continue the legacy by sending out faithful men out who would send others (2 Tim. 2:2).

We are all called to do it. Part of being a follower of Jesus is intentionally helping others to learn from him and become more like him. This happens in two ways:

- a) Evangelism (telling people who don't follow Jesus what it means to follow him which includes our families, colleagues, friends as well as strangers, See Matt. 28:19).
- b) Helping other believers grow in Christ's likeness. We are called to actively build each other up into the fullness of Christ (Eph. 2:19; 4:13, 29). We are called to instruct each other about Christ (Rom. 15:14) and to imitate others who are following Christ (1 Cor. 4:16, 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7, 9).

II. It's a wonderful way to spur one another on (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13; Eph. 4:29)

III. It is flexible. Unlike programmatic ministries this fits with the rhythms of life.

IV. It is how we make "disciple-makers" (2 Tim. 2:1-2). I will talk more about this throughout our sessions.

2. Who is called to disciple?

Disciples are called to go and make disciples (Matt 28:20). If you are a Christian, then you are a disciple (Mt. 10:38, 16:24-28; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23, 57-62; Jn. 10:27, 12:25-26). Of course, you can have both immature and mature disciples, but essentially if you are a follower of Jesus, you are a disciple.

Being engaged in discipleship then is the act of **following Jesus together**. Put by one minister **"it is really just a bunch of church members taking responsibility to prepare one another for glory"** (Mark Dever, Capitol Hill Baptist Church). We get that idea from Colossians 1:28 where we are called to proclaim Christ "admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28). It is God's people meeting around the Word to help each other learn and grow as we prepare each other to meet Jesus face-to-face. This is in line with the core mission here at St Pauls where we aim to bring people to Christ, build them up in Christ and send them out for Christ.

And so one-to-one or life-on-life discipleship is two (perhaps three) people meeting regularly with the intention of helping each other draw nearer to Jesus. It is taking people wherever they are on their journey (whether it be pre-conversion or mature Christian) and helping them to grow deep, wide, higher, longer, further, stronger in their relationship with Jesus with the hope that they will then go and help others to grow in their relationship with Jesus.

So, if you are a follower of Jesus and are seeking to grow and live in obedience to God, then you are qualified to make disciples. You do not need a bible college degree or to know how to preach from the platform, or to write theological essays. If you love Jesus and you know how to read the bible and pray, and you are passionate about seeing your brothers and sisters grow in their relationship with Jesus, then you are qualified.

This is a ministry that we should all be engaged in both intergenerationally and peer-to-peer. This of course is already happening among some people at our church (some in this room) but this is not the special responsibility of only a few but rather the responsibility of all. As disciples we are **all** called to go and make disciples (Matt. 28) and to prepare one another for glory (Col. 1:28). I love this quote from the writers of the Trellis and the Vine:

“Imagine if all Christians were caught up in a web of Bible reading, not only digging into the word privately, but reading it with their children before bed, with their spouse over breakfast, with a non-Christian colleague at work once a week over lunch, with a new Christian once a fortnight, and with a mature Christian friend once a month for mutual encouragement. It would be a chaotic web of personal relationships, prayer and bible reading – more of a movement than a program – but at another level it would be profoundly simply and within reach of all (T. Payne and C. Marshall, The Trellis and the Vine, p. 57).

It may sound like a lot – every person in the church meeting throughout the week to read the Bible – but if everyone meets with one person, we have done it.

So what is the take away? Who is called to disciple? (Answer: disciples, followers of Jesus, you, me) And who is qualified to disciple? (Answer: disciples, followers of Jesus, you, me, anyone who loves Jesus, reads his word and wants to see others grow in their relationship with Jesus).

3. What does one-to-one discipleship look like?

1. It needs to be intentional

If it is not intentional it is not reproducible! We want the people that we are discipling to actually be equipped to go and disciple others. This will require us to be purposeful and strategic about how we “follow Jesus together” (the practicalities will be discussed in more detail next week).

2. It needs to be gospel-centred

It is very difficult to disciple someone if the gospel doesn't come into the equation. Some people think the gospel is simply for conversion. But the gospel converts and matures us. One writer said, “no one ever graduates from the gospel” (Dodson, p. 38). When we put the gospel at the centre of our relationship we are fighting together “to find Jesus sweeter, richer, deeper, and more satisfying than anything else in the world” (Dodson, 127). It is only when we look directly into Jesus' face again and again that we are given all that we need to fight sin and live for Christ.

3. It needs to be flavoured with grace and encouragement.

I read once that “encouragement is the context in which equipping can take place”. In an atmosphere of love and grace, we can point people to Jesus, spur them on in the way of truth, and help them to grow and mature. In Romans 15:5-7, Paul prays that God will grant his people with endurance and encouragement so they can live in harmony and together in one voice glorify God.

4. It needs to be honest and real (aka life-to-life)

Jesus shared his life with his disciples. And if we are going to model that, we too need to be sharing our lives with one another. Now that will mean sharing your less than perfect moments and being willing to be transparent with the people you disciple. Have you ever noticed that when the gospel writers composed their letters (which they shared with their disciples) they didn't omit the very embarrassing low points in their ministry, like when they ran away after Jesus was arrested or when they argued over who would be the greatest, or when Jesus said to one of them “get behind me Satan”. They include the good, the bad, the ugly and they show how Jesus was gracious and redemptive through it all.

5. It needs to be relational

Mark 3:14 says, he [Jesus] appointed twelve so that they might be with him. He doesn't just speak at them, or teach them from a distance, but he did life with them. If you already have lunch at the same café every Monday, invite someone to join you. If you have a small child that normally sleeps from 12-2 maybe someone could come over and you could pray and read the Bible together. The point being: a) we meet together and b) we meet in a way that fits with the natural rhythms of our lives – it's a relationship.

6. It needs to be fluid

What I mean by fluid, is that discipleship shouldn't be overly rigid. There is no "one size fits all model". In the same way that people have different learning styles, I encourage you to be creative in the way you do one-to-one discipleship. For example, I spoke recently to Faith Oxley and Niki Shepherd and they both shared about how they used to meet and journal together. Paul shared about ripping out a page of the bible to read it with a tradie who was overwhelmed by the task of reading the bible, my dad used to incorporate devotions into his lunch break with his apprentice on the job site, some people meet over lunch, others meet while cooking dinner, some meet at cafes but the key here is that they gather around Jesus/the Word in a relational way. I like to think of this as the Miyagi method, a more fluid way of thinking about discipleship and less programmatic.

Challenge:

- Consider if there is a time in your weekly schedule (among the natural rhythms of life) where you can invite someone to come and do life with you as you follow Jesus together? What would that look like?

SESSION 2

FROM START TO FINISH

This session "From Start to Finish" will look at some more practical elements of one-to-one discipleship like how to start the relationship well (establishing expectations and boundaries from day one), as well as how to finish well, both in a single session and for the whole discipleship relationship.

1. Day One

When you first meet up with the person you plan to begin a one-to-one partnership, here are three suggestions:

Get to know each other

On the first meeting it would be best to use most of the time to simply get to know each other. Ask them to tell their story. Where they grew up, how they became a Christian etc. If it is hard to keep the conversation going you could ask questions about their family, job, interests, their experience of church, whether or not they are serving, the bible study they are in, the service they attend, how they become a Christian?

Establish expectations

In this first session it is also a good idea to establish expectations and boundaries.

A helpful checklist would be:

Where and when will you meet? Make a set time - e.g. the first Sunday of the month at 3:30pm before the 5pm service at Cosmo Cafe. You can meet anywhere but just pick somewhere you can open the Bible, pray and share freely. If you have small children you could meet at your home or a park. Discuss with the one you are discipling what they would feel comfortable with.

Clearly outline your commitment. For example, not only your commitment to meet once a fortnight but also to pray for them, to maintain confidentiality (unless there is risk of harm to themselves or someone else - more on that later) and to be open and honest with them about your own walk with Jesus. Your commitment ought to be for at least one year. You can discuss extending this should it be mutually agreed.

Discuss their commitment. What do you expect of them (i.e. meeting regularly and on time, engaging with the Bible and discussion, being open and honest).

Discuss what your sessions will look like. Will you discuss a book of the Bible? Or work through a book like Tim Keller's book on Prayer?

Discuss why you are meeting! Make it clear that you want to help them grow spiritually and so that is why you will be opening the Bible together and keeping the gospel central.

Discuss Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important for relationship building as you share honestly with one another and your relationship deepens. Confidentiality means that you can't share anything from your 121 time with anyone else without the person's permission, and it's important to explain that from the start of meeting together. However, confidentiality does not apply if the person shares something which may involve the risk of serious injury or harm to someone. If that happens, please contact Jo Gibbs, Paul Lucas or John Gray. Where possible and appropriate, let the person know that is what needs to happen and involve them in the process.

2. Offering care and keeping the relationship on-track

It is likely that the person you meet with will share things about their life, and God uses these conversations to help us grow in maturity. It's important to listen well, and to use gentle open questions to find out more about what life is like for them, so that you can be applying God's Word well together, and praying for one other. The focus of your relationship, however, is spiritual growth. If the issues that they raise become more complex, and beyond your level of training and expertise, it's important to let them know, and talk about getting more support for them. This could mean contacting the Care Minister Jo Gibbs or Paul Lucas. This may mean connecting them up with a counsellor or psychologist, and the Care Minister has a list of local professionals. It's important to know the boundaries of your role, and the focus of the 121 relationship in spiritual growth. It's important to establish these goals from the start, and to reaffirm them as you continue to meet together.

3. Caring for yourself

Following on from the last point it is important to also care for yourself. So, make sure that you are doing well, taking the appropriate time to rest, but also to have solid time with God and your family and your friends. Another way to care for yourself is to meet with someone so that you can debrief. Not only is it important to have these things planned at the beginning of starting a new discipleship partnership but it is important to check-in maybe once every couple of months. Am I feeling drained? Have I taken time to rest?

4. Finishing well

Finishing the session: Ending sessions with prayer is encouraged. It would be good to ask the person if they are comfortable with that first. If they are comfortable, end the meeting with prayer. This is also a great way to end a conversation if the person won't stop talking "before we wrap up what is something you would like prayer for? Or what is one thing I can pray for you right now?"

Finishing the partnership: In terms of ending the whole relationship. It is helpful to reassess at the end of the year and either extend the relationship for another 6 or 12 months or just finish up then. You can even reassess at the end of 6 months if you feel you are not "clicking" and that can be an easy way out.

Preparing disciple-makers/training others: A really important element of "finishing well" is preparing your disciple to go and make disciples. In 2 Tim. 2:2, the calling there is to go and make disciple-makers (pass on what you have been taught so they can in turn pass it on to others).

Edmund Chan says, "Disciple making is the process of bringing people into a right relationship with God, developing them to full maturity in Christ through intentional growth strategies, that they might multiply the entire process in others also." And so, as the relationship is drawing to an end (perhaps the last 3-6 months) it would be great to intentionally train your disciple. It could be as simple as bringing them along to a training session like this, where they can learn the ins and outs of discipleship.

Challenge:

- What are some important boundaries you would put in place in a one-to-one relationship?
- What would be some care strategies you could take to make sure you are doing well?

SESSION 3

THE HOWS OF ONE-TO-ONE DISCIPLESHIP

1. How to read a passage together and helpful resources to use

When it comes to actually opening the Bible with someone it can feel a bit daunting.

Some hints:

- Go through passages to keep within the context.
- It is Ok if you do not know something you can ask someone and get back to them.
- It is Ok to not have the answers. There are tensions in the Bible, some of which we just have to hold but they never undermine the truth.
- Ask hard questions of the text, Jesus can handle it.
- Always keep in mind how what you are reading relates to the gospel (this keeps you on track).
- Always be looking for opportunities to apply (given that you have caught up with what has been happening and you have heard their story).
- Moral and social issues are also important to think as you read and apply the gospel.

Some helpful resources for this are:

One-to-One Bible Reading - David Helm
God's Big Picture - Vaughan Roberts

2. How to pray together

- For the first few times you pray unless they offer to.
- Important for you to be a good example of someone who prays.
- Ask them respectfully if they would like to pray and when they do encourage them. The raw prayers are often the most inspiring.
- Keep it short.

3. How to answer difficult questions/ have difficult conversations

- Try and figure things out logically and use illustrations that are specific to them.
- Do not be afraid to take time to figure it out and get back to them.
- Read.
- Ask around. You can ask more than one person for responses.
- Try to work out the question behind the question. The question being asked can be a front for something.

Weekly challenge:

- Write down a friend's name you could read the bible with.
- Write down an older Christian's name who you could ask to read the bible with.
- Write down the reasons why you are eligible for this ministry.



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