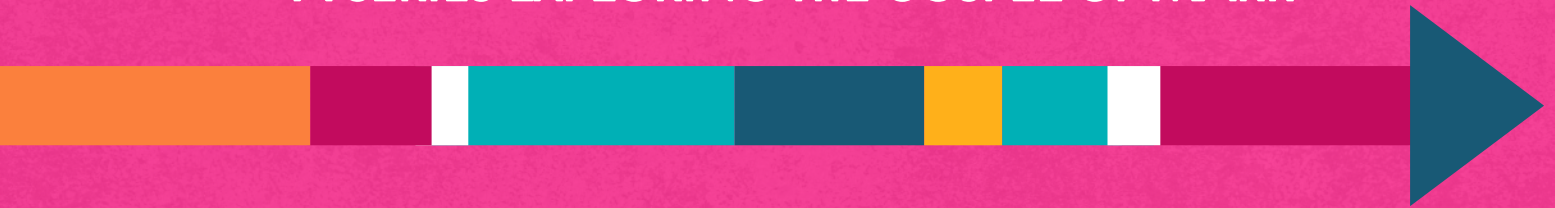


**small
groups**
LIFE TOGETHER



BRING

A SERIES EXPLORING THE GOSPEL OF MARK



leaders notes

A NOTE ON THE DESIGN OF THESE STUDIES

- **9 studies** have been written to accompany the Term 1 preaching series (see notes below)
- The expectation is that groups would do 8 out of 9 of these studies, with the group to decide which week they will use for a **community building activity**
- Week 10 of the term (**week starting 7th April**) **will be Mission Week** - no study has been written for this week, so that the group can either run their own mission activity, or participate in church run mission events
- The Mark preaching series will **continue over the Easter weekend** and the final week of the school holidays, but no studies have been written to accompany these weeks as the majority of groups break over the holidays
- The idea is to **at least do the numbered questions** during your study time - the 'Explore Further' questions are an added bonus if you want to take your group down these alley ways

DATES

WEEK ONE. 2nd Feb - **Bring the Gospel** Mark 1:1-20

WEEK TWO 9th Feb - **Bring the Sinners** Mark 2:1-12

1WEEK THREE 6th Feb - **Receive the Gospel** Mark 4:1-20

WEEK FOUR 23rd Feb - **Bring the Power** Mark 5:21-43

WEEK FIVE 2nd March - **Bring Courage** Mark 6:30-52

WEEK SIX 9th March - **Bring Faith** Mark 7:24-37

WEEK SEVEN 16th March - **Bring Vision** Mark 8:22-9:1

WEEK EIGHT 23rd March - **Bring Greatness** Mark 10:32-45,46-52

WEEK NINE 30th March - **Bring God's Kingdom** Mark 12:28-44

MISSION WEEK 6th April - **Bring the Bread and Wine** Mark 14:1-26

SCHOOL HOLS 13th April - **Bring the Cup** Mark 14:32-42

GOOD FRIDAY 18th April - **Death - Bring it On** Mark 15:21-41

EASTER SUNDAY 20th April - **Resurrection - Bring it On Part 2** Mark 15:42-16:8

SCHOOL HOLS 27th April - **Great Commission - Bring it out** Mark 16:9-20

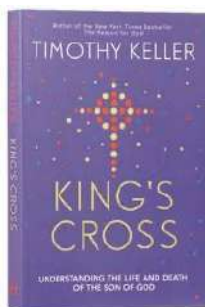
HELPFUL RESOURCES

FOR EVERYONE

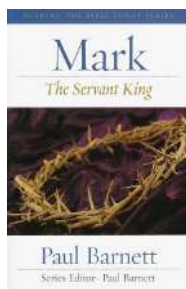


Overview video:

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/mark>

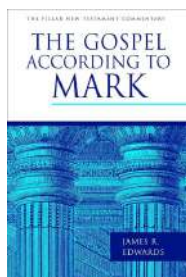


Tim Keller, *King's Cross*:
Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God

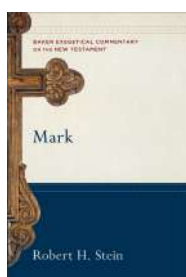


Paul Barnett,
The Servant King- Reading Mark Today

MORE TECHNICAL



James R. Edwards,
The Gospel According to Mark
(Pillar Commentary Series)



Robert H. Stein,
Mark (Baker Exegetical Commentary Series)

STUDY ONE

BRING THE GOSPEL

MARK 1:1-20



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What is the best 'advice' you've ever been given?

What is the difference between between 'news' and 'advice'?



READ MARK 1:1-20

1. What does the opening verse ('The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God') reveal about Mark's purpose in writing this Gospel?

His purpose is to lay out the contents of the good news (gospel) of Jesus, who is the long promised ultimate king and saviour of God's people (Christ=Messiah, and 'Son of God', pointing to Jesus' divinity, which will get fleshed out throughout the narrative, and defined by the his sacrifice on the cross - see Mark 15:39). The implication is that Mark's readers will hear this news as 'good' for them, and respond to it with the same sort of saving faith that many have towards Jesus throughout the narrative.



EXPLORE FURTHER

Why do you think Mark starts with this declaration rather than a genealogy (like in Matthew) or a birth narrative (like in Luke)?

One answer could be that Mark's audience is different - he is not trying to be as comprehensive, but more 'punchy' in his style to grab different readers to Luke and Matthew.

3. How does Mark 1:2-3 use Old Testament references to introduce John the Baptist and Jesus?

M uses quotes from Malachi and Isaiah to show that John the Baptist was the prophesied 'one who would come before the Lord appearing himself'. The implication of using these quotes about John is that Jesus (whom John announced) is 'The LORD' come to earth.



EXPLORE FURTHER

What does this say about the connection between the Old Testament and the mission of Jesus?

Jesus' coming is intrinsically linked to God's overarching plan to save a people for himself who will glorify Him forever, the fulfilment of His promises to act definitively in righteousness.

3. In verses 4-8, what is the significance of John the Baptist's message and baptism of repentance?

John was called to prepare God's people Israel for the coming of their God. The only appropriate preparation to come face to face with a holy God was to turn away from sin in their lives, and to signify that by being immersed in and washed by water.

4. How does Jesus' baptism in verses 9-11 confirm His identity and mission? What is the significance of the heavens opening, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the voice from heaven?

The voice from heaven (God) confirms that Jesus is His Son, and that He is sent in love and at the pleasure of the Father to do His will. The Spirit descends on Jesus to equip him to be the Spirit-anointed Suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah 40-66. The work of redemption is Trinitarian, anchored in love. Love is at the heart of existence.

5. What is the significance of Jesus being led into the wilderness and tempted (verses 12-13)?

Israel was called 'God's Son' (Ex 4:21-22), who went into the wilderness and was tempted and sinned. Jesus as God's Son is the perfect representation of what Israel was meant to be. He goes into the desert and is tempted, but remains faithful to God and sinless. This means he is able to then take our sin upon himself when he goes to the cross in our place, because He has no sin of his own to pay for. Jesus defeats the enemy Satan here who does the tempting, foreshadowing his total defeat of Satan at the cross.

6. How do Jesus' first words in Mark's Gospel (verses 14-15) summarise the heart of His message?

The Kingdom of God (His gracious rule over his graciously saved people) has arrived in the person of Jesus and what He will do by going to the cross to defeat sin and death and rise again to offer new life in His Spirit. The appropriate response is to turn away from self rule and trusting in fake 'gods', and to trust in Him by letting Him rule over us (which is always the best thing for us, since He rules in love and grace, knows all and is Good).

7. What do the calling of Simon, Andrew, James, and John (verses 16-20) reveal about discipleship? How does their willingness to leave their livelihood and families reflect the cost of following Jesus? How does this calling set the tone for what it means to follow Jesus throughout the Gospel of Mark?

Jesus' call takes priority over all other priorities in this life - from an earthly point of view, this can look costly, but by eternal reckoning, it is a very small price to pay.

TRANSFORMATION

When is the last time you reflected/ meditated on the fact that Jesus coming is good news for you (not just good advice to pull your socks up and try to be a better person)?

How might you respond in faith and repentance - stop trusting in things other than God, and turning away from things that Jesus hates to the things that Jesus loves?

PRAY TO CLOSE

STUDY TWO

BRING THE SINNERS

MARK 2:1-12



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What do you think is the popular perception of Jesus in our culture today?

What is the most remarkable example of faith in action that you have ever seen?



READ MARK 2:1-12

1. What does the context of Mark 2:1-12 reveal about Jesus' growing popularity and the challenges it creates (see Mark 1:45 for the reason why)? *Jesus has become known as a healer and an exorcist (see Mark 1:27,32-33), and so people are coming to Him to have their immediate problems dealt with, making it harder for them to hear the good news from Him that He has come to deal with the biggest problem (sin and Satan) that underlies all the other problems.*

2. How do the actions of the paralytic's friends (verses 3-4) reflect themes of faith and community?

They don't just believe that Jesus has the capacity to heal their friend - they believe to the extent that it shapes their actions (carrying him would have been very hard work, especially if they had heard that Jesus was now attracting crowds). Their faith was for their friend as much as for themselves.

3. Why does Jesus first address the paralytic's sins rather than his physical condition (verse 5)? What does this reveal about Jesus' priorities and His understanding of the paralytic's deepest need? How does this connect to Mark's presentation of Jesus as more than just a healer?

Jesus has come to deal with sin, that which breaks our relationship with our loving heavenly Father. He will make all things whole in time. The healings were signs pointing to that time that is to come, which is available to all who come to Jesus in faith.

4. How do the scribes' silent questions (verses 6-7) reveal their understanding of Jesus and their resistance to Him? Why is forgiving sins considered blasphemy in their view?

The scribes see Jesus as a powerful teacher and healer, and therefore a threat to their power base. They consider Him a blasphemer as only God can forgive sins, and Jesus is pronouncing a forgiveness they feel can only be done by God.

5. Why does Jesus link His authority to forgive sins with His power to heal? (verses 8-12)

The external visible miracle (his legs being made to work again) points to the reality of the internal invisible miracle (the forgiveness of sins and restoration of relationship with God), and therefore to his authority to pronounce such forgiveness

6. How does this passage contribute to Mark's overarching portrayal of Jesus as the Son of God?

It shows that Jesus has the divine authority to forgive sins, and the power to renew creation as a sign of the great renewal of creation that will come at the end. The forgiveness of sins here foreshadows the forgiveness that will be offered to all through his death on the cross as the Spirit Anointed Suffering Servant.



What is it that stops you from seeing that the biggest problem that those around you have is not physical or economic, but is a broken relationship with God that can only be fixed through the good news of Jesus?

What might help you to see this more clearly, and to take the loving action of sharing the remedy for their biggest problem?

PRAY TO CLOSE

STUDY THREE

RECEIVE THE GOSPEL

MARK 4:1-20



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What stood out to you from Sunday's message on this passage?

Share something that either you have grown from a seed, or something spectacular you have seen that grew from a seed.



READ MARK 4:1-20

1. Why does Jesus teach the crowd in parables, as seen in Mark 4:1-2 and 10-12? What does this method of teaching suggest about the nature of Jesus' ministry and the Kingdom of God?

Jesus teaches in parables in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 6:9-10 - it is a means of teaching that exposes the heart - those who have ears to hear are those who are ready (by God's help) to hear the good news and respond with their lives in trust - those who do not have ears to hear are those with hardened hearts, who are confirmed in their hardness by the misunderstanding and rejection of the message of the parables. "Only in fellowship with Jesus do parables disclose the meaning of the kingdom of God" - Edwards, 126.

2. What does the parable of the sower (verses 3-9) reveal about the message of the Kingdom of God? How does the imagery of the seed and soil help explain the spread and reception of the Gospel?

The good news is like seed - it has a power which is unleashed once it finds the right type of soil. The four types of soils are four types of hearers/lives, 2 of which look promising at first but then fall away, one of which displays outright rejection, and the last one is a life ready to receive Jesus as Lord and Saviour and bear the fruit of His Spirit as they walk with him in trust and obedience.

3. How does Jesus' explanation of the parable in verses 13-20 help clarify its meaning? Why does Jesus describe this parable as foundational to understanding all parables (verse 13)?

Jesus gives the meaning to those on the 'inside' with Him, who have come to Him in faith seeking more. This underlines the way that parables work. We, the readers, have been included on the 'inside' with Jesus' closest disciples by overhearing this explanation - Mark's purpose is for us to see as clearly as we can the nature of God's Kingdom come in Christ and respond with saving faith.

4. What does the seed sown on the path (verse 15) tell us about the role of spiritual opposition in rejecting the Gospel?

Satan is actively trying to blind people to the truth of Jesus - prayer is essential in the sharing of the Gospel.

5. How do the seeds in rocky soil and among thorns (verses 16-19) illustrate the challenges of following Jesus? How does this relate to Jesus' earlier call to radical discipleship in Mark 1-3?

There is a real danger that the thing of the world can choke out faith in Jesus. Jesus doesn't fit around the edges of an earthy life.

6. What does the seed in good soil (verse 20) demonstrate about the power and fruitfulness of true faith? How does this verse highlight the transformative potential of receiving the Gospel with an open and obedient heart? How does this fruitfulness connect to Jesus' call for His disciples to bear witness to the Kingdom of God?

Let the group answer.

7. How does this parable as a whole relate to the themes of response and understanding in Mark's Gospel? How does it explain the varying responses to Jesus' ministry throughout Mark (e.g., crowds, disciples, religious leaders)? How does this parable encourage readers to evaluate their own response to Jesus and His message?

Let the group answer.



TRANSFORMATION

Can you think of people in your life experience who match the different soils that Jesus speaks about here? As you reflect on them, what have you learned from those observations?

As we think about opportunities to invite people in Mission Week, how does the teaching in this parable encourage you or challenge you?

PRAY TO CLOSE

STUDY FOUR

BRING THE POWER

MARK 5:21-43



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What stood out to you from Sunday's message on this passage?

How do you see power used well or poorly in your life, or the world around us? Why do you think it is that way?



READ MARK 5:21-43

1. How does the interweaving of Jairus' story with the woman's story (a "sandwich" structure- Story A part 1 - Story B - Story A part 2) highlight key themes in this passage? Why might Mark choose to present these two miracles together? How does this narrative technique emphasise themes of faith, desperation, and Jesus' power?

Explore the group's answers. Mark likely wants the readers to feel the dramatic tension of the imminent death of Jairus' daughter, and Jesus' apparent delay at stopping to help the woman who has been afflicted for many years and is completely outcast. The 2 events together testify to Jesus' command over time, and his salvation offered to people at either end of the social spectrum.

2. How does Jairus' approach to Jesus (verses 22-24) reflect faith, humility, and the recognition of Jesus' authority? What does Jairus' request reveal about his understanding of who Jesus is?

Jairus is a synagogue leader, yet falls at Jesus' feet. His faith has led him to abandon all earthly pretence of authority, and to trust in Jesus, whom He is convinced has the authority to cheat death for his daughter.

3. In verses 25–34, what does the woman’s condition and her act of touching Jesus’ garment reveal about her faith?

The woman has such faith in Jesus that she is convinced even being in His immediate presence will be able to save her. She is poor and empty, she has come to the end of herself, and has nothing to lose by coming to Him. Jesus meets such faith with grace.

4. Why does Jesus publicly acknowledge the woman’s healing (verses 30–34), even though she approached Him secretly? What is the significance of Jesus’ words, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well’ (verse 34)?

This incident clearly fits with Jesus’ mission as the Suffering Servant Messiah come to rescue humanity, and so he speaks out loud that the crowds might understand something of his true identity and the nature of saving faith in Him.

5. How does Jesus respond to the news of Jairus’ daughter’s death in verses 35–36, and what does this teach about faith in seemingly hopeless situations?

- Why does Jesus tell Jairus, “Do not fear, only believe” (verse 36)?
- How does this interaction challenge readers to trust Jesus even when circumstances appear impossible?

Explore the group’s answers.

6. What is the significance of Jesus' actions in raising Jairus' daughter (verses 37-43) How do details like His command for privacy and the tender words "Talitha kum" reflect both His authority and compassion? How does this miracle reinforce Mark's presentation of Jesus as having authority over life and death?

Jesus shows that He has come to break the power of death and free humanity from the fear of death (Heb 2:14-15). Jesus demonstrates that He is intensely personal, He cares for us, His authority over sin and death and creation is expressed in tender compassion.

7. How do these two miracles together reveal Jesus' power and mission in the context of Mark's Gospel? How do they address different types of need (chronic suffering versus sudden death) and demonstrate Jesus' concern for all people?

How does this passage deepen the reader's understanding of the themes of faith, healing, and the breaking down of social barriers (e.g., touching the unclean woman and the dead girl)?

Explore the group's answers.



TRANSFORMATION

How do you think Jesus' use of power in this combined story package should shape how we view the Gospel, share the Gospel, help others, and use power ourselves?

PRAY TO CLOSE

STUDY FIVE

BRING COURAGE

MARK 6:30-52



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What stood out to you from Sunday's message on this passage?



READ MARK 6:30-52

1. How does Jesus' invitation to His disciples to "come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while" (verse 31) reflect His care for them and His priorities in ministry?

It is important to note little details like this in the text that are so easily skipped. Jesus shows here that he knows the disciples are humans in human bodies that need to be cared for, and that rest at appropriate times is actually part of being on mission.

2. What does Jesus' response to the crowd (verse 34) reveal about His character and mission?

Jesus 'had compassion on them' - literally, 'he was moved deeply inside'. This is a visceral response. Jesus, as God in the flesh, shows us that our great creator and sovereign God who is high and lofty above us, is not indifferent to the lost; He cares deeply and personally about their plight.



EXPLORE FURTHER

Why does Mark emphasise that Jesus had compassion on them because they were "like sheep without a shepherd"? How does this imagery connect to Old Testament themes of shepherding and leadership (e.g., Psalm 23, Ezekiel 34)?

Look up Ezekiel 34. There, through His prophet, God chastises the leadership of Israel (His chosen people) because they were meant to be shepherds, leading His people to green pastures and still waters, but instead were corrupt, self-seeking, and godless. In that prophecy, God promises to come among His people as their shepherd. Jesus here echoes this prophecy of Ezekiel, and foreshadows His own role as the Great Shepherd of his sheep. (John 10:11; 1 Peter 5:4)

3. What does the feeding of the five thousand (verses 35–44) reveal about Jesus' ability to provide for His people? How does this miracle demonstrate Jesus' divine authority and fulfilment of God's provision, similar to the manna in the wilderness? How does the role of the disciples in distributing the food highlight their involvement in Jesus' mission?

Jesus is willing and able to provide. The bread points to Jesus' provision of Himself as the bread that lasts forever – this is a re-enactment and fulfilment of God's provision for His people in the wilderness in Exodus. The disciples' involvement foreshadows their 'distribution' of the gospel of the Lord Jesus (true manna from heaven), as well their participation in the 'compassion' of God for this world while we await its ultimate renewal.

4. How do the details of the feeding miracle – such as the abundance of food and the twelve baskets of leftovers – symbolise the Kingdom of God? What does the abundance and order of this miracle suggest about the sufficiency of Jesus' provision for both physical and spiritual needs?

Jesus is able to provide abundantly for the spiritual and physical needs of his people. This is a 'sign' pointing to the new creation where there is no such thing as need or scarcity. The twelve baskets of leftovers are a sign that the people of God, once constituted as the 12 tribes of Israel, are fulfilled in the coming of Jesus and his mission.

5. What is the significance of Jesus walking on the water (verses 45–51) in the context of Mark's presentation of His identity (see Job 9:8, Psalm 77:19)?

Jesus walking on the water reveals His divine identity as the one who has authority over creation, echoing Old Testament imagery of God's sovereignty over the seas (e.g., Job 9:8, Psalm 77:19). By coming to the disciples amidst the storm, He demonstrates not only His power but also His compassionate presence with His people in times of fear and struggle. This act underscores Mark's portrayal of Jesus as both the divine Son of God and the Shepherd who cares intimately for His followers.



EXPLORE FURTHER

Why is Jesus' declaration, "Take heart; it is I (literally: 'I am'). Do not be afraid," important in understanding who He is?

Jesus reveals that He is the great 'I am' who acted in mighty ways to save His people in the OT, and is now here in person to act decisively to bring salvation and renewal.

6. How do the disciples' reactions to Jesus walking on water and calming the storm (verses 49-52) reflect a recurring theme in Mark? How does this episode reveal their ongoing struggle to fully grasp Jesus' identity, despite witnessing His miracles?

The disciples in Mark are often portrayed as being 'slow on the uptake' about who Jesus really is and why He has come (I don't blame them, I would have been even slower I think!). We as readers have been given a privileged view of who Jesus is from the beginning of the Gospel of Mark - the disciples' struggles challenge us to take stock of how we view Jesus and how we respond to Him in all of our lives.



TRANSFORMATION

What are the parts of your life where you are living in fear, and how might a realignment of your vision of Jesus and a leaning in to Him help you bring courage to those situations?

PRAY TO CLOSE

STUDY SIX

BRING FAITH

MARK 7:24-37



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What stood out to you from Sunday's message on this passage?

If someone came up to you and asked you to give a definition of 'faith' in relation to Christianity, what would you say?



READ MARK 7:24-37

1. Why is it significant that Jesus travels to the region of Tyre and interacts with a Gentile woman (verses 24-26)? What does this reveal about the expanding scope of Jesus' ministry beyond Israel? How does this moment align with Mark's broader emphasis on the inclusion of outsiders?

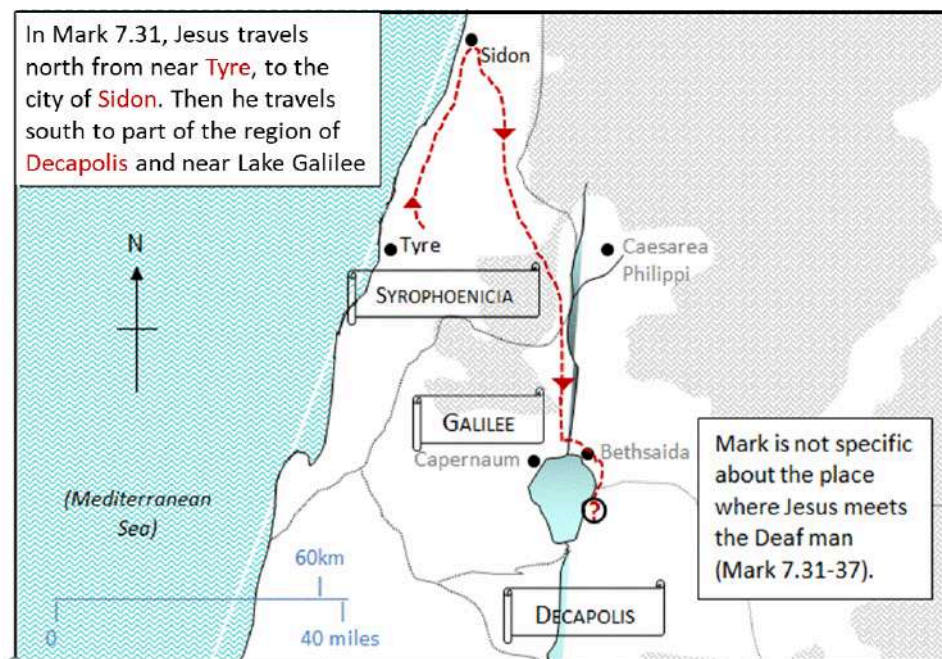


Image source: <https://bslbible.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Map-the-journey-north-and-back-Mark-7.31-37>

Jesus is committed to bringing the good news of salvation and the kingdom of God to all people, starting with the historical people of God, and expanding outwards. Those who were considered historical enemies of God's people are now being deliberately included by God incarnate.

2. How does the Syrophenician woman's response to Jesus (verses 27-28) demonstrate faith and humility?

She approaches Jesus trusting that He has the power to help her and the compassion to listen to her cry for help, and she is humble enough to leave the shape of His answer to Him, knowing that if were 'even the crumbs' that would be enough.

3. What does Jesus' healing of the woman's daughter (verse 29) reveal about His power and willingness to respond to faith? How does this event emphasise that faith, not ethnicity or status, is the key to receiving Jesus' help?

Explore the group's responses.

4. Why does Mark include the healing of the deaf and mute man in the region of the Decapolis (verses 31-35)? Why might Mark highlight Jesus' use of physical touch and gestures in this miracle?

Decapolis refers to a region comprising a group of ten predominantly Gentile cities located east of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. These cities, influenced by Greek and Roman culture, were centers of Hellenistic lifestyle, distinct from the predominantly Jewish regions where Jesus often ministered. Jesus' interactions in the Decapolis highlight the inclusivity of His mission, as He extends His ministry of healing and proclamation of the Kingdom of God beyond the boundaries of Israel to the Gentile world, foreshadowing the global reach of the Gospel.

Jesus' use of physical touch and gestures emphasizes His personal and compassionate engagement with those He heals. These actions communicate care and connection, especially to a man who, being deaf and mute, would rely on nonverbal communication. Mark highlights these details to demonstrate that Jesus' ministry is not only about divine power but also about His deeply relational approach, showing the Kingdom of God as a place of restoration that is both physical and personal.

5. How does the crowd's reaction ("He has done all things well," verse 37) point to Jesus' identity as the Messiah (see Isaiah 35:5-6)? What difference does this make to how you view Jesus now?

Isaiah 35 speaks of a day when God Himself will come to his broken world to save it and renew it. Isaiah 35:3-6 says: "Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you." Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy."

The crowd's reaction points to their acknowledgment of Jesus fulfilling this prophecy of Isaiah. We should marvel that God would first promise to come, and then fulfil His promise to come in salvation for us, closely and personally.

6. How do these two miracles together reflect key themes of Mark's Gospel, such as faith, inclusion, and restoration? How do these events challenge assumptions about who can approach Jesus and receive His help? How do they highlight Jesus' mission to bring healing and salvation to all people?

Explore the group's responses.



TRANSFORMATION

How is your faith in Jesus being expressed right now in your relationships, your habits, your diary, and your interactions with the world around you?

PRAY TO CLOSE

STUDY SEVEN

BRING VISION

MARK 8:22-9:1



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What stood out to you from Sunday's message on this passage?

Where do you think you might be in 10 years time, and why?



READ MARK 8:22-9:1

1. What is the significance of the two-stage healing of the blind man in Bethsaida (8:22-26)? How does this healing serve as a metaphor for the disciples' growing but incomplete understanding of Jesus?

Mark 8 is a turning point in the Gospel. The disciples have seen and heard Jesus up to this point, but references to His mission involving dying have been veiled up to now. They see Him as a Messiah in the 'victorious conquering King' sense (a la 2 Samuel 7), but not as a King who will obtain his victory through shameful death and resurrection (Isaiah 53 Suffering Servant). The 2 stage 'opening of eyes' miracle here acts as a metaphor for the opening of the disciples' eyes to see all that it means for Jesus to be the Messiah (see question below - ask that one before you tease all of this out)

2. In Peter's confession (8:27-30), why is it significant that he declares Jesus to be the Christ? What does Peter's confession reveal about his understanding of Jesus at this point, and how is it still limited?

See answers to previous question.

3. Why does Jesus immediately follow Peter's confession with a prediction of His suffering, rejection, and death (8:31-33)? How does Jesus' teaching about His suffering challenge the disciples' expectations of the Messiah? Why does Jesus rebuke Peter so strongly when Peter opposes the idea of a suffering Messiah?

Jesus gives the prediction because this is what it will mean for Him to bring the ultimate victory as the Christ, the victory over sin, and death and Satan. The disciples still have a very temporal and earthly vision of who Jesus is, and so Jesus challenges this. Jesus rebukes Peter so strongly because for Him to do anything less than the cross and resurrection will not fulfil all that His Father sent Him to do, and the suggestion that He should not die echoes the temptation from Satan back in the desert (Mark 1:12-23 - see Matthew 4:1-11 for the way that Satan tempts Jesus to be a 'King' who won't suffer).

4. What does Jesus mean by calling His followers to "deny themselves and take up their cross" (8:34-35)?

Discipleship is not about 'self-fulfilment' in this world's terms. It is about abandoning any sense of self that does not worship God at the centre, and take its reference and meaning from being a child of God, redeemed by Jesus sacrifice in our place and His resurrection, and lived with reference to His Lordship. Only in this experience can our true, eternal and joy filled self be found.

5. How do Jesus' statements about gaining the world but forfeiting the soul (8:36-37) emphasise the cost of following Him? How does this teaching challenge worldly values of success and self-preservation?

There is a real battle for the soul - the temptations of this world and the Devil are real. It really looks like something to 'gain the world' when we look upon it with eyes not redeemed and renewed by Jesus - once they are opened by Jesus to see who He is, who we really are because of Him, and what will happen to this world, we can see that giving up things of this world that wont last anyway is not really a cost.

6. Why does Jesus speak of the “Son of Man” coming in glory with His angels (8:38)?

How does this statement balance the themes of suffering and future vindication? What does it reveal about Jesus’ ultimate authority and the eternal consequences of accepting or rejecting Him?

Jesus points to the real future. This world is passing away. What we suffer here is a drop in the ocean of our joy filled eternity, if we hold onto Christ and obey Him.

TRANSFORMATION

How can we/I intentionally cultivate such a vision of the reality of eternity and Jesus gracious kingship over it, that we/I will view the things of this world as passing, and risk sharing the need for salvation in Jesus with others, that they might know a sure and certain inheritance in eternity like we/I do?

PRAY TO CLOSE

STUDY EIGHT

BRING GREATNESS

MARK 10:32-52



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What stood out to you from Sunday's message on this passage?

Share one example of a 'great leader', and one example of a 'terrible leader', and give reasons for your choices. Who was the best and worst of everyone mentioned?



READ MARK 10:32-52

1. Why does Mark highlight the disciples' amazement and fear as they follow Jesus? How does Jesus' third prediction of His suffering and death deepen the reader's understanding of His role as the suffering Messiah?

We are meant to see the 'human-ness' of the disciples, really responding in real time to extraordinary things, and in some way, that aids us in our walk with Jesus now, freeing us to feel and fear even as we walk with trust. This 3rd prediction highlights that Jesus' suffering will come at the hands of those who should welcome Him, the leaders of God's people - and that they will do the unthinkable, and hand the Messiah over to Gentiles to have Him killed.

2. What does the request of James and John (10:35-37) reveal about their understanding of Jesus' mission and their own ambitions? How does their request for positions of glory contrast with Jesus' prediction of His suffering? What does this moment reveal about human desires for power and recognition?

Explore the group's responses.

3. What does it mean to drink the cup that Jesus drinks and to be baptized with His baptism (10:38-40)?

When Jesus uses these terms of Himself, He is talking about the suffering and death that He must undergo to pay for the sins of humanity in His role as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. When he uses them of the disciples, he is referring to a path that may include suffering and persecution for Jesus' name now (see Mark 8:30), but will then end in glory.

4. How does Jesus contrast worldly leadership with the values of His Kingdom (10:41-45)?

Why is verse 45 ("For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many") central to understanding Jesus' mission and the Gospel of Mark as a whole?

Greatness is humble service, not using power to exalt oneself or push others around. Verse 45 is the key to understanding why the Messiah will claim victory through a lowly path of suffering and death - His death will be a ransom for many, to release them from bondage to slavery and death by paying for their sins with His own innocent life.

5. How does the healing of Bartimaeus (10:46-52) illustrate faith and discipleship? What is significant about Bartimaeus calling Jesus "Son of David," and how does this connect to Jesus' messianic identity? How does Bartimaeus' persistence in seeking healing reflect the faith that Jesus values?

'Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, is sitting 'by the roadside'. He is, in other words, sidelined or marginalised. The difference in his position 'beside the road' at the beginning of the story and 'on the road' at the end of the story signifies the difference between being an outsider and an insider, a bystander and a disciple.' Edwards, 329.

'Son of David' links Jesus to the well known prophecy about the great Messiah coming from David's line (2 Samuel 7). The fact that he calls for the Messiah to 'have mercy' links this great warrior king idea with the compassion of God for His people, and idea expressed in the Servant prophecies in Isaiah that we have seen fulfilled in previous weeks in Jesus' healings. Bartimaeus' persistence shows the sort of desperation that leads to genuine faith. He was at the end of himself, all he could do was call out in trust to Jesus.

6. How does Bartimaeus' response to Jesus' healing – immediately following Him on the way (10:52) – serve as a model for discipleship? How does this contrast with earlier moments in Mark where disciples struggled to understand or follow Jesus fully?

What does it mean to “follow Jesus on the way,” especially in light of His journey to the cross?

Explore the group's responses.

7. How do these two episodes together (10:32–45 and 10:46–52) illustrate the themes of suffering, service, and faith in Mark's Gospel? How does Bartimaeus' physical blindness and healing parallel the spiritual blindness of the disciples in the earlier passage? How do these stories prepare the reader for the climax of Jesus' mission in Jerusalem?

Greatness will involve humble suffering on the road to glory. True discipleship involves giving up self sufficiency and placing trust in Jesus, who is able to save and heal, and will save and heal in His own perfect timing. Our king is a suffering and dying and rising King.

TRANSFORMATION

What are you aiming your life at? Where might you need to repent of following the world's view of greatness? Where can you give thanks to God for allowing you to see the greatness of serving and walking the road with Jesus?

PRAY TO CLOSE

STUDY NINE

BRING GOD'S KINGDOM

MARK 12:28-44



DISCUSSION STARTERS

What stood out to you from Sunday's message on this passage?

What are you looking forward to in the future?



READ MARK 12:28-44

1. What is the significance of the scribe's question about the greatest commandment (12:28-31) within the context of Mark's Gospel? How does Jesus' response summarise the heart of God's law and His teaching throughout Mark?

The scribe's question about the greatest commandment is significant because it shifts the tone from confrontation to genuine inquiry, standing apart from the hostile challenges of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians earlier in Mark 12. Unlike their attempts to trap Jesus, this scribe seeks clarity on a foundational issue of the law, providing an opportunity for Jesus to articulate the essence of God's will. This moment reflects Mark's broader theme of the importance of recognizing Jesus' authority and teaching as central to understanding God's Kingdom.

Jesus' response summarises the heart of God's law and His teaching in Mark by uniting love for God (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and love for neighbour (Leviticus 19:18). This dual command encapsulates the essence of discipleship, emphasising a holistic devotion to God that naturally overflows into selfless care for others. Throughout Mark, Jesus models this teaching in His ministry, demonstrating that love - not ritual or legalism - is the defining mark of God's Kingdom and its people.

2. How does Jesus' emphasis on loving God and loving one's neighbour (12:29-31) reveal the priorities of the Kingdom of God? What does it mean to love God "with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength"?

Explore the group's responses.

3. Why does Jesus commend the scribe's response in verses 32-34, and what does it mean that he is "not far from the kingdom of God"?

- How does the scribe's agreement with Jesus contrast with the attitudes of other religious leaders in Mark?

The scribe is 'not far from' the kingdom of God, because he has approached Jesus with a genuine question seeking understanding the real things of God, rather than a trap or a power play. When one comes to Jesus with that sort of searching faith, one is close to hearing truth and potentially responding to Jesus with trust (which is the way to be a part of the Kingdom of God).

4. In verses 35-37, why does Jesus question the scribes' teaching about the Messiah being merely David's son? How does Jesus' reference to Psalm 110 challenge the limited understanding of the Messiah's identity?

Jesus brings up their own teaching from Psalm 110 to challenge their limited notion that the Messiah could be merely another David, a human. He is pushing them to a greater understanding by asking questions that arise from the psalm itself. The only way that David's son could be also David's 'Lord' is if somehow David's physical descendant were also divine, which is what all of the New Testament testifies to in Jesus.

5. How does Jesus' warning against the scribes (12:38-40) critique religious hypocrisy? What behaviours does Jesus condemn, and why are they particularly serious in the context of spiritual leadership? How does this warning relate to Mark's recurring theme of humility versus pride?

Explore the group's responses.

6. What is the significance of the widow's offering in verses 41-44, especially in contrast to the behaviour of the scribes?

- How does the widow's sacrificial giving demonstrate true devotion and trust in God?

- Why does Jesus say that the widow's gift is greater than that of the wealthy, even though it is much smaller in monetary value?

The widow gives genuinely, generously, out of her devotion to God, and for His attention alone, in stark contrast to the ostentatious religiosity of the scribes, who want to be seen in all of their public acts of worship.

7. How do these three episodes together (the greatest commandment, the Messiah's identity, and the widow's offering) emphasise key themes in Mark's Gospel?

- How do they highlight the tension between external religiosity and true devotion?

- How does this passage prepare readers to reflect on Jesus' ultimate act of sacrificial love and His call to follow Him?

Explore the group's responses.

TRANSFORMATION

How are you travelling with the challenges to discipleship that come from these episodes - love of God with all you are and have, love of neighbour, heartfelt and humble devotion to Jesus who is Lord of all? What might you need to work on, and how will you do that? How can the group help each other in this?

PRAY TO CLOSE

small
groups
LIFE TOGETHER