

Week 4: Mark 6 - 13

Study Guide for the week of January 24-30, 2011

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with Mark 8:27-30, Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah.

This passage is often considered the pivot point of Mark's gospel; the chapters leading up to it present evidence that Jesus is the Messiah while the subsequent chapters explore what the real Messiah actually is and does. Who does the world say Jesus is? A great teacher, moral person, gifted healer, charismatic leader, miracle worker ... God? List those things you have heard people say about Jesus' identity. Now, who do you say Jesus is? This is the most important question you will ever answer; each human being will have to answer it for themselves. Peter declared Jesus was the Messiah, but he didn't understand correctly or fully what kind of Messiah Jesus was (Mark 8:31-33). List the things you believe the Messiah should do and be for you. Now honestly assess how many of those things on your list have to do with your own agenda versus God's purposes. How do you understand following Jesus – as a road to becoming healthy, wealthy, and wise, a life of ease? Or does it involve working hard, changing hurtful habits and attitudes, the possibility of being misunderstood or suffering, a life that may seem difficult? How are you like Peter in seeing things from a human point of view? What things can help you re-orient your view to be more like God's?

Discussion starters *If you are leading a small group, may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker: What do you imagine people thought of you in your hometown?
2. *(This question will be asked each week at the start of the discussion on the Bible readings for the week.)* Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. Mark 6:6b-13 Brainstorm reasons why Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs. What are the advantages of working with others? Disadvantages? Who are the people you're paired with?
4. Mark 6:14-29 What was Herod's view of John the Baptist? Where is the tragedy in this story? Have you ever made a promise to someone that you later regretted?
5. Mark 6:31-32 Does the busyness in this verse sound like your life? Are you resting on a regular basis? Read Exodus 20:8-11. Is rest optional in God's creation? What do you need to change in your life to obey this commandment?
6. Mark 7:14-23 What do you understand Jesus to be teaching in these verses? How do you apply this to your own life?
7. Mark 8:14-21 Jesus doesn't really seem to connect all the dots here. What does he want his disciples to understand? What is a question you have about anything to do with Jesus or the Christian faith?
8. Mark 10:13-16 What does it mean to receive the Kingdom as a child? List some characteristics of children and distinguish between those that are childlike and those that are childish. Do children have genuine power or total autonomy? Do adults? How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your own understanding and life?
9. Mark 10:17-27 It says in verse 21, "Jesus looked at him and loved him." The words used here are very passionate words that could be paraphrased, "Jesus looked him hard in the eye and, seeing deep into his soul, Jesus' was deeply moved and loved him." Look at this whole scene and what Jesus teaches following it through the lens of verse 21. What do you see? What are you tempted to cling to more than Jesus?
10. Mark 13:26-36 If you knew for certain that the second coming of Jesus would occur 24 hour hours from now, what would you do between now and then? How might you apply your own answer to the way you are currently living?

Bible verse to memorize: Mark 8:29

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end the time together with a question like this:

- What was the high and low for you from this last week and how can we pray for you?

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that small groups is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.