

The Gospel of Mark: Part 2

DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE



AMAZED
BY JESUS



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AMAZED BY JESUS INTRO

In his Gospel, Mark often arranges events from the life and ministry of Jesus to clarify theological concepts. For example, the miracles of giving hearing to a deaf man (7:31-36) and sight to a blind man (8:22-26) are meant to not only show the power of Jesus but also to communicate the necessity of divine revelation for *spiritual* sight and hearing. Without the direct intervention of God, we cannot truly know the person of Jesus. After seven chapters of confusion and unbelief on the part of the disciples, Peter announces that Jesus is the Messiah. *This* is the person of Jesus: He is the anointed King of the universe.

After He is finally declared to be the Messiah by His disciples, Jesus immediately connects His identity as anointed King with suffering, rejection, death, and victorious resurrection. Jesus is the one who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many. Jesus, in the very essence of His character, is One who sacrifices Himself, One who gives Himself over to judgment and death, in order to give mercy and life to those whom the Father has given Him. The question before us is this: can we surrender to this kind of love, even if it costs us all of our so-called control? Will we give up our resistance to the love God has for us, and ask Him to give us hearts receptive to His love?

A THEOLOGY OF THE GOSPELS

What's the difference between the *gospel* and the *Gospels*?

The *gospel* is the good news of what God has done in Jesus's life, death, resurrection, and ascension to redeem His people for His own glory.¹

The *Gospels* are the four books that begin the New Testament - Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John. These four books are "historical narrative motivated by theological concerns"² and "stories of God's eschatological, redemptive, covenant-fulfilling activity through the person of Jesus of Nazareth."³


What does this mean? ***The four Gospels are historically-true, authoritative, and infallible narratives about Jesus the Messiah and how He is the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.*** The *Gospels* are what G.K. Beale calls redemptive history, which he defines as "God's salvific dealings with his people throughout the entire history, from the fall of Adam until the final consummation."⁴ We may not be told about Jesus's eye color or His childhood interactions with friends, but we are told and shown how He fulfills and even continues the story of the Old

¹ D.A. Carson, The Gospel Coalition (www.thegospelcoalition.org)

² Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*

³ Michael J. Kruger, *Covenant Theology: Covenant in the Gospels*

⁴ G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*



Testament, and how He will bring history to completion at His return.

The four documents we now call Gospels weren't designated as such until after the Second Century. But the earliest disciples of Jesus were anticipating written documents because the Jewish community already had a precedent for such documents: the entire Old Testament. Since the disciples were intimately familiar with covenantal documents, they were expecting new documents to come with the New Covenant. Not only this, but Jesus Himself tells of this reality in John 17:

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word."

From the beginning, Christianity was going to continue in the tradition of Judaism as it advanced through "the word" of Jesus' disciples. We have that "word" recorded in the Gospels.

BACKGROUND ON THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Biblical scholar Michael Kruger writes this about the Gospels:

*"The covenantal nature of these books means they are not so much human testimony about God as they are God's testimony to humans about the terms of his covenant through Jesus. God is the maker of divine covenants and therefore rightly understood to be the author of covenant documents. [...] The Gospels are authoritative [...] because the Gospels are, from their very inception, a legal and divine witness."*⁵

The Gospel of Mark, then, is about one thing: Jesus. This is not a narrative about social revolution, moral instruction, or religious experiences; this is a proclamation about Jesus the Son of God, written to provoke faith in Him. With this in mind, below is some basic information about the Gospel of Mark.

- This is the only Gospel that explicitly refers to itself as a proclamation of *good news* or *glad tidings*
- The first verse of Mark would have been immediately recognized by anyone familiar with Roman government as a direct rebuttal to the claim that the Caesar was divine. One inscription about Caesar Augustus says this: "Caesar, by his appearance excelled our expectations and surpassed all previous benefactors [...] the birthday of the god Augustus was

⁵ Kruger, *Covenant Theology*

the beginning for the world of the good news that came by reason of him.”

- When Mark writes that his document is the good news about Jesus **Christ** (Messiah), he is immediately connecting the identity and actions of Jesus with the entire Old Testament story.
- When Mark writes that his document is the good news about Jesus Christ, the **Son of God**, he is not only communicating truth, he is refuting the dominant cultural and political narrative of his day.
 - This makes the ending of Mark even more astounding because a centurion, who would have been required to have total devotion to Rome, announces the actual truth at the death of Jesus: “Truly *this man* was the Son of God!”
- Mark is the earliest written Gospel, having been written some time in the late 50’s to early 60’s AD (roughly 20-30 years after Jesus ascended)
- The Roman emperor Nero began his rule around the same time as the Mark was written; Nero would (in AD 64) begin heavily persecuting Christians - clothing them in animal skins so they’d be devoured, crucifying them, and lighting them on fire in his royal gardens
- Most likely written from Rome by the man called John Mark in Acts 12:25 and “my son” in 1 Peter 5:13

- Mark orders events by topic, not chronologically
- Numerous scholars believe that the Apostle Peter's experiences with Jesus form the background of the Gospel of Mark
 - This makes the Gospel's appear even more historically accurate since the Apostle Peter would hardly want to make himself and his fellow disciples seem so ignorant about Jesus and His true mission, unless that is actually what happened

Four key verses:

- Mark 1:1 - "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God."
- Mark 1:11 - "And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."
- Mark 8:29 - "And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, 'You are the Christ.'"
- Mark 15:39 - "And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the Son of God!'"
- Mark begins his Gospel identifying Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God. Throughout the Gospel, Mark shows how these two titles of Jesus are intimately linked to His death and resurrection.

COMMUNITY GROUP LEADER GUIDE

WEEK 24

FAITH THAT BLOWS GOD AWAY

MARK 7:24-30

PASSAGE SUMMARY

After rebuking the religious leaders for their adherence to tradition over Scripture, Jesus travels to a Gentile region (Tyre and Sidon) and demonstrates that their tradition was invalid by purposely engaging a Gentile woman, whom those leaders would have considered unclean.

Here, a Gentile woman, like others who have shown trust in Jesus, falls at His feet, begging Him to help her possessed daughter. Jesus uses a vivid illustration in order to evoke a response⁶. The woman shockingly responds with humility and persevering faith, and Jesus responds to her faith with healing power. God never intended His glory and grace to remain only in Israel, for He has people from all nations and tribes who belong to Him, and the way to access God is faith alone.

⁶ Additional help for this verse can be found here: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/faith-gentile-woman/>

GROUP INTRO

This passage contains what is, on the surface, a difficult saying from Jesus. As our culture grows further and further away from knowledge about the Bible, how can we help those around us engage with Bible passages that they find confusing, intolerant, or repulsive?

TEXT

1. What is the setting of this passage and who is present? How are these people described? What does this reveal to us about Jesus and His mission, in contrast with the religious leaders of His day?
2. Jesus calling a woman a “dog” seems harsh and unnecessary to us, but what He is communicating is summarized by one theologian: *“The table is set and the family has gathered. It is inappropriate to interrupt the meal and allow the household dogs to carry off the children’s bread.”*⁷ With this in mind, why does Jesus use such a vivid illustration here? Why doesn’t He immediately heal the woman’s daughter?
3. Why is the woman’s response to Jesus significant? How does this response differ from the responses of the religious leaders, crowds, and even Jesus’ disciples?

⁷ William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 262.

4. What does this woman's response teach us about the right way to relate to Jesus?

APPLICATION

1. Jesus' vivid illustration doesn't stop this woman's faithful pursuit of Him. Instead, she shows profound humility and true faith. What does humility look like in a person?
2. What does God want us to believe or trust about Him based on this passage?
3. Based on this passage, is there something God wants us to desire?
4. Are you someone who has attempted to "hide" Jesus? How can you take an opportunity to instead reveal or talk about Jesus this week?

PRAYER

Praise Jesus for His global mission and how He has ministered to you.

Ask Jesus to save those in your life who don't know Him as Lord and Savior.

Ask God to forgive you for your pride, and to cleanse you of it.

WEEK 25

THE POTTER AND THE CLAY

MARK 7:31-37

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Our Lord returns to an area - the Decapolis - where He had delivered a man from demonic possession (see Mark 5:1-20). Here He heals a deaf man with a speech impediment and instructs the crowd to tell no one what has happened. Mark includes several precise details about how Jesus healed, but one of the most important details is given in verse 32: "And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment..." This is significant because the Greek word translated "speech impediment" is only used one other time in the entire Bible, in the Greek translation of Isaiah 35:6, which reads, "then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy." In the context of Isaiah 35, the time of the Messiah is being described and prophesied.

Mark is making the same point he made in the first verse of his Gospel: Jesus is the Messiah - the anointed King - and the heart of the gospel, indeed the heart of the entire Bible, is Jesus being the universal, gracious King and Son of God. The shock for the early church, however, would have been the fact that so many revelations of Jesus as Messiah happened not in Jerusalem but in non-Jewish (Gentile) areas.

GROUP INTRO

In Jesus' time, the core hope among the Jewish people was the arrival of the Messiah, God's anointed King. Discuss some of the hopes (other than Jesus) you see people in our culture and people in your life holding to, and take some time to pray for opportunities to show non Christians how Jesus is the only true hope for anyone.

TEXT

1. Sometimes we forget that the hope for the Messiah began early in human history and continued throughout the time of the Old Testament. With this in mind, take turns reading Isaiah 35:1-7. How does this passage help us understand the significance of Jesus' actions in Mark 7:31-37?
2. Since Jesus is again in the Decapolis, recall the story of the demon-possessed man in Mark 5:1-20. What are some differences between this passage and the passage in Mark 5? Why does Jesus do things differently here?
3. Why does Mark continue to emphasize specific locations throughout his Gospel? How does this help show the mission of God's people?
4. What do we learn about God in this passage? What do we learn about how we can approach and relate to God?

APPLICATION

1. One of the most significant things we can do as human beings is bring our problems, suffering, questions, and difficulties to Jesus. What is happening in your life right now that we, together, can bring to Jesus in prayer?
2. When did Jesus last do something in your life that caused you to be “astonished beyond measure”? How can that astonishment lead you to tell others the gospel?
3. Think about someone in your life who does not know Jesus but desperately needs His forgiveness, healing, restoration, or truth. Brainstorm ways to “bring them to Jesus”.

PRAYER

Pray that the Holy Spirit would continually help you to be amazed by Jesus.

Ask God to forgive you for any pride or doubt that has hindered you from coming to Him with your pain or problems.

Ask God to keep the leaders of Living Stones astonished by Jesus and trusting Him for all of their needs.

Thank God for the sacrifice of Jesus, and ask Him to save those who don't yet trust Jesus.

WEEK 26

GOOD BREAD, BAD BREAD

MARK 8:1-21

PASSAGE SUMMARY

A consistent theme in Mark's Gospel is the sufficiency of Jesus to be enough - and to provide enough - for the needs of all people. In what almost looks like a duplicate of an earlier miracle⁸, Jesus feeds 4,000 people with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. The key difference here, though, is that these are Gentiles. In the face of such power and compassionate provision for both Jews and Gentiles, the disciples again find themselves confused and stricken with unbelief.

The Pharisees then come to maliciously seek a sign from Jesus as a test (the Greek word used here is the same word translated as "tempt" in Mark 1:13 when satan tempts Jesus), only to have Him refuse their request for validating evidence. The point is this: Jesus delights to reveal Himself to those who approach Him in humble faith, but to approach Jesus with resolute unbelief and pride not only grieves and disappoints Him (Jesus "sighed deeply in His spirit") but drives a person to reject the revelation He has already given. This is why the religious elite, who were brimming with pride and arrogance, could look the Messiah in the face and sentence Him to death on a cross.

⁸ The fact that Jesus Himself differentiates between these two events in verses 19-21 shows that He did in fact miraculously provide food to at least two different groups of people at two separate times.

Yet those who trust in Jesus see in the cross the powerful provision of God: through the death of Jesus, God gives forgiveness, victory, healing and eternal life. But only if Jesus is received in faith. The Apostle Paul later clarifies this point in his letter to the church in Corinth: "For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

GROUP INTRO

This week we see that Jesus loves to reveal Himself to and consistently provide for those who humbly trust Him. Think of a time in your own life when Jesus came to you either with a fuller revelation of Himself or with something that you needed.

TEXT

1. The main theological difference between this miraculous feeding and the one in Mark 6:30-44 is the fact that this takes place in Gentile territory. Why is this fact important for understanding Jesus' role as Messiah? How does this fact connect Jesus' ministry with the rest of Scripture?
2. Why does Jesus refuse to give the Pharisees a sign? What does this reveal to us about the character of Jesus?
3. In Scripture, leaven is often a symbol of evil. What, then, is the "evil" of the Pharisees and Herod? Why does Jesus warn about this evil?

4. Instead of listening to Jesus' teaching concerning the evil of the Pharisees and Herod, the disciples start to argue about their lack of bread. So Jesus rebukes them and asks several questions. Read Mark 4:10-12 and then discuss why it is ridiculous for the disciples to be worried about bread.

APPLICATION

1. What did you learn about God from this passage?
2. In light of this passage, why would we relate to Jesus with humility and trust?
3. What obstacles, events, or experiences cause you to doubt the provision and presence of Jesus? How can God's gifts of community, Scripture, communion, and worship gatherings help you fight that doubt?
4. If you only had this passage to explain the gospel to someone, how would you do it?

PRAYER

Pray for God's forgiveness for your own hard-heartedness and unbelief.

Thank God for the Holy Spirit, who helps us when we struggle with unbelief.

Ask God to have mercy on and to deliver those in your life who treat Jesus like the Pharisees treated Him.

WEEK 27

RESTORING SIGHT

MARK 8:22-38

PASSAGE SUMMARY

This passage covers a crucial turning point in Mark's Gospel as Peter comes to confess the identity of Jesus. Almost immediately after Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus connects His identity to suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. This connection proves to be disorienting for the disciples as Peter, acting as the voice for all of Jesus' first followers, cannot fit this dark destiny into his conception of the Messiah. Far from being a worldly conqueror, Jesus came to be humiliated and punished at the hands of an occupying government. It seems that God's power is displayed in the gospel, and at the heart of the gospel is the Lamb of God who is rejected, condemned, and crucified for the sins of His people, only to resurrect from the dead three days later.

The miracle that starts this passage, then, proves to be a prophetic statement: if we are to perceive the true identity of Jesus and follow Him into a fate similar to His, He must first miraculously touch us and heal our hardened, unbelieving blindness. If we refuse this touch of Christ, or assume ourselves to be exempt from needing it, then the threat of Jesus here falls upon us: "Whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

GROUP INTRO

To follow Jesus is to have a radically different view of what it means to live a good life. In this week's passage, Jesus states that "whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it."

With this in mind, if someone were to look at your bank account and your calendar, would they conclude that you are trying to live for yourself or live for Jesus? Why?

TEXT

1. Take some time to observe these verses together - what is sticking out? Do any of these verses raise questions for you?
2. Why does Jesus state that He must "suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again"? In other words, why is the rejection, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus necessary?
3. Why does Jesus call Peter "Satan" in verse 33? How is Peter's rebuke of Jesus evidence of Peter's hard-heartedness and evil?

4. Have someone read Philippians 2:1-11. How can this passage help us understand what Jesus means by “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”? Are there other Bible passages that clarify for us what it means to deny ourselves and follow Jesus?
5. How do we reconcile Jesus’ teaching in verses 34-38 with the doctrine of Sola Fide - “faith alone” - i.e. that we are saved from God’s judgment by faith alone in Jesus alone?

APPLICATION

1. Jesus essentially asks the disciples to take stock of popular opinions about him when he asks, “Who do people say that I am?” What are some popular perspectives on Jesus in our own culture? Who do we perceive the Lord to be in this Community Group? How do we gauge whether or not we have a right view of Jesus?
2. What in this passages moves you to love Jesus more or be more intrigued by Him?
3. How might God be calling you to change your perspective on Him, yourself, or others through this passage? How can you share this new perspective with others?
4. If you had to summarize why Jesus is worth following - even if it means saying “no” to your personal goals and agenda - how would you do so?



PRAYER

Thank Jesus for the fact that He is so committed to His gracious covenant that He willingly endured rejection, shame, suffering, and death for us.

Ask God to transform your perspective of Him and of your life so that your life more closely resembles the life of Jesus.

Ask the Spirit to help you more fully and readily surrender to God and His great love in all areas of your life.

WEEK 28

TRANSFIGURATION

MARK 9:1-13

PASSAGE SUMMARY

On the heels of Jesus' warning about His coming in glory in Mark 8:38, Jesus announces that some of His disciples will see a manifestation of glorious power before they die. This promise is fulfilled six days later when Jesus takes His three closest disciples up a mountain and is transfigured (the Greek word is *metamorphoo*, and is found in Matt. 17:2; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18).

The point of this transfiguration is revelatory: the revelation of Jesus' glory and God's demand that the disciples listen to Jesus is to help clarify Jesus' difficult teaching about His death and resurrection from the previous chapter: here Jesus is more definitely confirmed to be the Son of God and the final revelation of God, far surpassing the revelation given through the Old Covenant writings (here represented by Moses and Elijah).

GROUP INTRO

Take a few moments to dialogue about the impact of the Gospel of Mark upon you so far. What has been most impactful? What has been most challenging?

TEXT

1. One of the most important tools for faithful biblical study - simple observation - is often overlooked or ignored. With this in mind, take some time to observe this passage, taking note of any repeated words, metaphors, action words, characters, timeline, and setting. Discuss your observations - what did you notice that you haven't noticed before?
2. So far in Mark's Gospel, how has Jesus' identity as the Messiah or Son of God been revealed? What makes this revelation of Jesus' identity different?
3. Why is this the transfiguration significant in redemptive history?
4. Why do Elijah and Moses appear with Jesus? What do these figures have to do with the ministry of Jesus?

APPLICATION

1. Jesus is the Son of God whom we must "listen to", i.e. obey. What makes obedience to Jesus beautiful and worth it - even when it calls for great sacrifice?
2. How can you change your prayer life, knowing that there will come a day when Jesus arrives in His full glory? What might need to change in your life in order to reorient your prayers?

3. Describe a time in your life when Jesus identity was a challenge to understand, believe, or trust as a true reality. How did God bring you to a deeper understanding of and trust in Jesus' identity as the Son of God who loves you?
4. What characteristics of God stand out to you in this passage? Why?

PRAYER

Disciples making disciples: give thanks to God for His Word, and ask Him to help you truly and joyfully obey the Son of God

Outsiders becoming insiders: ask God to fully reveal Himself to your unbelieving neighbors and give them saving faith

Unity in diversity: thank God for His global mission, and ask Him to unify people of different political opinions in His Son

In the city, for the city: ask God to make Jesus known in your city, and give opportunities for Living Stones to make Jesus known

Churches planting churches: we want the Son of God to be known, loved, and obeyed across Northern Nevada, so ask God to raise up Jesus-loving church planters to plant more churches

WEEK 29

HELP MY UNBELIEF

MARK 9:14-29

RESOURCES

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/help-unbelief>

<https://www.billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/pistis>

PASSAGE SUMMARY

All ultimate deliverance from sin, evil, and the effects of sin upon us (including death) requires faith in Jesus, for it is only by faith in Jesus that we are made new creations and eventually welcomed into the sinless new creation with resurrected bodies. In this passage, which is the last exorcism Mark will present in his Gospel, Jesus encounters unbelief in two forms: the unbelief of His disciples and the unbelief of a demon-possessed boy's father. The solution to unbelief is summarized in the father's reaction to Jesus' rebuke as he desperately cries out: "I believe; help my unbelief!" It is Jesus alone who wields the power to deliver, even when trust in Him is mixed with the darkness of unbelief.

The lessons introduced here aren't only for the two parties who manifest a lack of faith, for we need the continual reminder that our stubborn unbelief, utter sinfulness, and brokenness can only be cured by the powerful word and touch of Jesus. We, too, need to often cry out, "I believe; help my unbelief" and then receive, in the context of a trusting relationship, from Jesus what only He can provide.

GROUP INTRO

There are many definitions of the word “believe” floating around in our culture. According to the Bible, what does it mean to believe Jesus or believe the gospel?

TEXT

1. Observe the passage. What happened before this passage? What events are occurring in this passage? Who is present and what role are they playing in the passage?
2. It could be very easy to take verse 23 out of context. Why does Jesus state that “All things are possible for one who believes”? Is this a guarantee from Jesus that we’ll always get what we ask for if we have enough faith? Why or why not?
3. Why is Jesus exasperated by the faithlessness of the crowd and His own disciples? What does this tell us about human nature?
4. What attributes of God are displayed in this passage?

APPLICATION


1. In your own Christian life, how has God helped your unbelief transform into trust?
2. What are some practical ways to have your faith strengthened? What resources has God given us to trust Him even when we're struggling to believe?
3. Which part of this passage drew you into deeper love for Jesus?
4. Is there damage have you seen done or experienced yourself as a result of someone misunderstanding Jesus' words in verse 23? How can we help one another heal after experiencing this kind of damage?

PRAYER

Pray the J.O.Y. prayers below:

Jesus: Thank Jesus for revealing Himself to you. Praise Him for the gifts of the Bible, community, prayer, communion, and worship songs. Confess to Jesus areas of unbelief in your own heart, and ask Him to meet you there with grace and mercy.

Others: Ask Jesus to help those in your group, church, and city who are struggling with unbelief. Ask God to provide extra strength and comfort to those who have struggled with trusting Him due to suffering or disorienting circumstances. Ask God to save those in your life who are actively walking in unrepentant unbelief.



Yourself: Thank God for the faith you have, for strengthening your faith, and for maturing you as a believer. Ask God to bring you into scenarios and situations which will help your faith grow. Ask God for help to take advantage of all of His means of grace.

STAND ALONE SERMON

"THE SON OF MAN" STUDY

RESOURCES

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/jesus-son-man>

SUMMARY

As we travel through the Gospel of Mark, we'll inevitably notice that Jesus' favorite reference to Himself is the title "Son of Man". This brief guide will walk your group through this title and its biblical origins, significance, and beauty.

GROUP INTRO

Take a few minutes to write down the New Testament's various titles used to refer to Jesus. Which title for Jesus do you most often use? Why?

TEXT

1. Read aloud the following Old Testament passages. Based on these passages, ***what is the meaning of "son of man" in the Old Testament?***

Numbers 23:19

Psalms 146:3

Isaiah 51:11-13

Ezekiel 2:1-3

2. The book of Daniel shows what it looks like to trust the sovereign God in the midst of suffering, exile, and rebellion. It is broken into two parts: historical narrative (chapters 1-6) and apocalyptic visions (chapters 7-12). In chapter 7 Daniel describes a vision he receives of God (the "Ancient of Days") and a figure referred to as "one like a son of man".

With the above background information, read Daniel 7:13-14.

What details make it apparent that this "son of man" is different than other Old Testament references to any "son of man"?

Why is it significant that "one like a son of man" is given "dominion and glory and a kingdom" and that "all peoples, nations, and languages" serve this son of man?

3. How does Jesus bring together both Old Testament meanings of "son of man" in Mark 8:27-38 and in Mark 14:53-65?
4. Another significant Old Testament passage that mentions a "son of man" is Psalm 8. Read Psalm 8 and then read Hebrews 2:6-10. How does Jesus, as the Son of Man, become "crowned with glory" and regain dominion over creation?

APPLICATION

1. What is encouraging, comforting, and reassuring about the fact that Jesus is truly human?
2. What is humbling and emboldening about the fact that Jesus is truly God?
3. Since Jesus is the Son of Man, and He lived perfectly on behalf of all those who trust in Him and died to atone for our sin, how can we now address sin in our lives or in the lives of others?

PRAYER

Praise Jesus for humbling Himself to become a man on our behalf.

Ask God for help to truly believe the gospel announcement that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are enough to cover all sin past, present, and future.

Ask God for opportunities to proclaim this gospel to those who do not know Him.

WEEK 30

FINISHING LAST

MARK 9:30-37

RESOURCES

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/jesus-command-others-silent-messianic-secret/>

<https://www.9marks.org/article/cultivate-humility/>

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Across the story of Scripture we find numerous promises about the Messiah - or "Anointed King" - and the salvation he would bring to God's people. In this week's passage, Jesus again announces that the Messiah has come to be killed and then resurrect, not to violently overthrow an oppressive government. His disciples fail to understand His teaching, and instead spend their time arguing about personal greatness. Jesus uses their failure to walk in humility as a teaching moment: anyone who wants to follow Jesus and achieve true greatness must humble themselves and renounce status-seeking behavior, much like a child would do. Additionally, Jesus' call into discipleship is a call to sacrificially serve, rather than be served.

GROUP INTRO

The Bible has a lot to say about humility and the pursuit of greatness. While God made us with a desire to leave a lasting mark for good on the world and those around us⁹, we often pursue greatness at the expense of others or for our own glory. This week's text contrasts the world's way of pursuing greatness and God's way of pursuing greatness, which was most clearly demonstrated in the character and actions of Jesus.

Write down how you see our culture defining greatness, success, or significance.

According to our culture, what does it look like for someone to be great, to succeed, or be significant?

TEXT

1. As we come to this passage, where are we in the story of God's redemption? What situation are God's people in as Jesus does ministry?
2. Why do the disciples fail to understand what Jesus says in verse 31, despite the fact that Jesus is very clear in what He says?
3. It is easy for us to gloss over the fact that Jesus came to die. Describe why the death and resurrection of Jesus had to happen. Why was the death and resurrection of Jesus God's "Plan A"?

⁹ See Gen. 1:26 where God entrusts the dominion and care of creation to humans.

4. In verses 35-37, Jesus essentially acts out His teaching about humility and kingdom greatness by telling His disciples that they must become like dependent kids in their mindset and lowly servants in their actions. How does Jesus supremely embody this mindset and this kind of servanthood in His ministry?
5. Jesus calls His disciples children in verses 35-37 and in next week's passage (verse 42). What does it practically look like for someone to "receive" one of Jesus' disciples?

APPLICATION

1. What amazes you most about Jesus in this passage? Why?
2. How does this passage describe humility? Think of a brother or sister in the church you would describe as humble. What does humility practically look like in their life?
3. Read James 4:10 and 1 Peter 5:6-7. How do these passages motivate and empower you to sacrifice for others? What practices or habits can help you be more selfless and humble?
4. When did you last sacrificially serve someone or give to someone? Describe your experience. If it has been some time, how will you do differently this upcoming week?

PRAYER

Pray a prayer of confession to God for your pride and selfishness. Ask God to cleanse you and give you a renewed desire to sacrifice for His glory.

Biblical example of this kind of prayer: Psalm 51

Ask God to end the horrors of abortion, child abuse, neglect, and child slavery in America and across the world.

Biblical example of this kind of prayer: Psalm 10:12-15

Praise Jesus for humbling Himself and dying in your place.

Biblical example of this kind of prayer: Jude 1:25

Thank God for the hope of the resurrection, and your future exaltation.

Biblical example of this kind of prayer: Ephesians 3:16-21

WEEK 31

FRIENDS & ENEMIES

MARK 9:38-50

RESOURCES

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/hell-as-endless-punishment/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-mortification-of-sin/>

<https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/salted-fire/>
(for help with Mark 9:49)

PASSAGE SUMMARY

One of the most emotionally difficult teachings in Scripture is the teaching about Hell as a real place of eternal, conscious torment. In this passage, Jesus describes Hell as a place of “unquenchable fire”, and makes it clear through metaphorical language that suffering great loss for the sake of entering and enjoying God and His eternal kingdom is worth it due to both God’s goodness and the utter horror of Hell.

Rather than discussing the reality of Hell in the context of others causing a disciple to stumble, Jesus discusses Hell in the context of one’s personal battle against sin; the demands of discipleship are real, as are the consequences for allowing anything to come between you and eternal life with God. Whatever stands in the way of the eternal life Jesus offers is not worth holding onto -

firstly because God is so good that He deserves total allegiance, and secondly because pursuing and treasuring sin instead of Jesus has real - and eternal - consequences.

GROUP INTRO

It's healthy to admit that suffering, death, and Hell are not easy to think about, and are often avoided through distractions or unbelief. With this in mind, take some time to pray through the following description of God before studying this week's text:

"And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!'" (Rev. 4:8)

TEXT

1. Disciples of Jesus represent Jesus, and are saved and sent out into the world by His sovereign choice. With this in mind, why does Jesus state that a reward will come for something as simple as someone giving a cup of water to a disciple?

2. In last week's passage, Jesus told His disciples they were to become like a child in following Him, and to receive other disciples who have the same childlike faith. Here Jesus states that if someone causes a disciple of His to sin it would be better for them to drown with a millstone around their neck. Why does Jesus use this shocking imagery to make His point?



An example of an ancient millstone.


3. One commentator says this about Jesus' words in verses 43-47: "Whatever in one's life tempts one to be untrue to God must be discarded, promptly and decisively, even as a surgeon amputates a hand or a leg in order to save a life."¹⁰ Is Jesus recommending that someone actually disfigure themselves in order to fight sin? What Bible passages support your answer?
4. Why does Jesus talk about Hell here? And why does He use metaphorical language to describe Hell? What other passages in Scripture describe Hell?

APPLICATION

1. Ensuring that the church is a community where honesty about sin is encouraged, confession of sin is received with grace, and forgiveness and mercy are offered is something we all have to fight for. How are we doing as a Community Group with this fight? What actions can we take to be sure we're able to be honest about sin, confessing sin, and extending forgiveness?
2. How does the Bible say Christians can deal with their sin? What concrete actions can be taken by Christians to fight sin?¹¹
3. Where in this passage do you see God's grace? Where do you see the gospel? Which parts of this passage cause you to be grateful for Jesus?

¹⁰ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, pg. 348.

¹¹ See the second link under "Resources" on page 23 of this guide.

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4. Develop a plan to tell someone the gospel this week. Pray specifically for the person(s) you plan to tell about Jesus and the eternal life He freely offers.

PRAYER

Pray prayers of thanks to God for the good news about Jesus.

Biblical example of this kind of prayer: Revelation 5:9-13

Pray for God to save the person(s) you plan to tell the gospel.

Biblical example of this kind of prayer: Psalm 86:15; Psalm 145:8; Luke 18:13