



COMMUNITY
BIBLE CHURCH

FOLLOW ME

Mark 8:34

6 Studies From Mark 6-8

Lesson 1: MARK 6.1 – 13, 30 – 32

This week's first section of Scripture is all about astonishment! It opens with the people of Nazareth being astonished and concludes with Jesus marvelling. And we too will be amazed as we journey with Jesus and witness the cynicism and animosity He encountered. Let's begin. Read Mark 6.1-6a.

1. a. Where has Jesus based His ministry so far? (Hint: See 1.21; 2.1). Now review 6.1-2a. Where has He travelled? (See 1.9 for this town's name.) What kind of reception would you have expected for Jesus here of all places?

 b. Review 1.21-22. What similarities can you detect between Jesus' earlier ministry in Capernaum, and His present outreach in Nazareth?

2. What is the initial response of Jesus' relatives, former neighbours and old playmates (v.2)? How do these first impressions deteriorate (v. 3)?

Jesus' close friend, the apostle John witnessed this rejection first hand. Later he wrote, "He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him" (Jn. 1.11). How does this disturbing turn of events fulfill OT prophecy, such as Isaiah 53.3? How do we detect the shadow of the Cross here? Why does it matter that we worship and follow a Saviour who "has been despised and rejected?"

3. How do the questions of the townspeople reveal their skepticism and objections to Jesus (vv. 2-3)? Consider each one.

The people of Nazareth thought they knew all about Jesus and were unwilling to have their neat and tidy labels altered. "Jesus will constantly shatter all our categories and formulas because He is greater than them all" (D. English). What preconceptions of Jesus have you had shattered?

Lesson 1

4. How did Jesus respond to this derisive rejection (v. 4)? List three circles of people who failed to see who Jesus really was (v. 4).

What does this reveal about the depth of their knowledge of Jesus (despite years of living with Him)?

OPTION: Review Mark 3.20-21. How had the response of His very closest family already fallen far short of worship (cf. John 7.5)?

5. Jesus is “amazed” or “marvels” only twice in the NT; one of those times is in v.6. What, tragically, moves Him to marvel within His hometown?

How does that unbelief influence what Jesus can do there (v. 5)? If Jesus had forced His healing miracles on this unbelieving and opposing community, how would this have been a betrayal of His character and purposes?

6. Before we head into the next section, take a peek at v. 1 again. Who accompanied Jesus to Nazareth? How would this incident have trained and prepared them? What does it teach us?

7. Read Mark 6.6b-13. What does Jesus next do after His rejection (6b-7)?

8. Why might Jesus have commissioned His disciples for ministry in pairs (v.7)? (See Dt. 19.15; Eccles. 4.9-12)

9. What items were the disciples forbidden to take with them for this specific mission (vv. 8-9)? What did these likely symbolise? How might they hinder trusting dependence on God?

OPTION: Glance at Exodus 12.11 to discover a fascinating parallel! In what ways does this mission of the disciples resemble the Exodus?

The ESV Study Bible explains that these unique instructions portrayed the disciples' mission as one of "peace, defencelessness, trust in God, and urgency." Should our mission also be flavoured by these qualities? If so—how do we model these to a watching world?

10. The disciples had just witnessed Jesus' rejection. Now it would be their turn. What were they to do when rejected (v. 11)? What did this symbolise?
11. How were the disciples to mirror and extend Jesus' ministry (vv. 12-13)?

The disciples' outreach, following Jesus' pattern, balanced the priority of proclamation and teaching with ministry to both spiritual and physical needs. Do we too follow Jesus' pattern? What dangers might lie in an unbalanced approach?

12. The mission completed, the disciples report back to Jesus their words and works (v. 30). What need does Jesus recognise in them following this intense outreach, and what is His compassionate invitation (v. 31-32)?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE: *He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53.3).*
2. *The first prerequisite of discipleship is being with Jesus* (W. Barclay). Schedule an appointment in your calendar to enjoy “alone time” with Jesus.
3. Evaluate your past week. How closely did your priorities resemble those of Jesus and His disciples? Was there balanced expression of both “the message and the mercy of the King?” (W. Barclay)
4. W. Lane writes, *Unbelief excluded the people of Nazareth from the dramatic disclosure of God’s grace that others had experienced.* Are there pockets of unbelief in your heart? Talk to God about this.

Lesson 2: MARK 6.14-29

Today's passage showcases Mark's skill at shaping his narrative into "sandwich" patterns. In the midst of the disciples' first mission, Mark inserts this disturbing account of John the Baptist's death. As you read, be alert for ways this intentionally placed "interruption" illustrates what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Begin by reading Mark 6.14-29.

1. What alerted Herod to Jesus' ministry (v. 14, review vv. 12-13)?

Although it's the disciples who have been engaged in outreach, whose name has been publicised? What does this tell us about the disciples' mission?

2. Throughout Mark, the issue of Jesus' identity has remained central. What are three popular opinions of who Jesus really is (vv. 14-16)?

Leave Herod's palace and jump back to 21st century Canada. What are popular opinions voiced about Jesus here and now? How can we provide an alternate voice? If someone asked you who Jesus was, or who Jesus was to you, how would / could / should you respond?

3. The last time John the Baptist was mentioned in Mark, what was his situation (1.14)?

Now what significant event does Mark reveal to his readers (v. 14)?

What further specifics do we discover in v. 16?

The rest of this passage (vv. 17-29) will be a historical "flashback," filling in the readers, including us, about the details of John's final days.

4. Why had John originally been arrested (vv. 16-17)?

Lesson 2

5. As a result of John's courageous moral convictions, who had become his implacable enemy? What shape does her infuriated desire for revenge take (vv. 19-20)?

OPTION: Does she remind you of anyone else in biblical history?

6. From a human standpoint, why was John's life initially spared (v. 19)?
7. List all you can glean about Herod's complex relationship with John (v. 19).

Have you ever known someone to be gripped by this strange mixture of fear and fascination with the truth about God? How does such an ambivalent response to Jesus offer an opportunity for us?

8. How is Herod manoeuvred into John's beheading? In what ways has he put himself into this situation (vv. 21.ff.)?
9. What is the stepdaughter's request and how does she exceed even her mother's cruelty (vv. 24-25)?
10. V. 26 contains the tragic record of a weak man caving into wrong. How does Herod initially react to his step-daughter's vile demand (v. 26)?

Why does Herod end up fulfilling the gruesome request?

But because of his _____ and his _____ (v. 26).

Review v.21. Why do these guests sway Herod so greatly? What heart attitudes does Herod reveal?

11. List the shocking chain of events which rapidly unfolds in vv. 27-28.

Discuss: what parallels can be detected between John's and Jesus' final days and deaths? What can we learn from this?

12. How does this passage conclude its account of John's life (v. 29)?
13. At first glance this story seems to interrupt the account of the disciples' outreach. But thoughtful study concludes that this portrayal of John's martyrdom doesn't interrupt Mark's message; instead, it *interprets* it.
 - a) How does this description of John the Baptist's death shed light on what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?

"To be a disciple of Jesus . . . means following Jesus all the way to the cross, and beyond" (D. English). Was John this kind of disciple? Does this seem like an accurate definition of discipleship in our lives? How should we pray about this?

- b) Page back to Mark 1. What was his essential task? To " the way of the Lord" (1.2).

Now, move ahead to Mark 6. If the essential role of John was as a forerunner, preparing the way for Jesus and pointing to Him, *and* Mark focuses most on John's suffering and death, what then might we conclude about the role John's death played? Was it just a tragic ending to a mighty ministry? Or was it purposeful in itself?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Memorise: *Jesus said, "If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me"* (Mark 8.34).
2. This text has drawn together the themes of mission and martyrdom. Commit extra time this week to pray for the men and women around the globe who daily risk their lives by their commitment and service for Christ.
3. Herod silenced John, but he couldn't silence his own guilty conscience. No one can. Savour Isa.53.5-6. Thank Jesus for completely bearing our sins on the cross, so they no longer need burden us with their guilt and accusation.

Lesson 3: MARK 6.33-52

Last week, we concluded with a banquet—Herod’s decadent birthday bash. This week, we’re invited to an even greater feast, one hosted by Jesus, Israel’s Messiah and perfect Shepherd. As Jesus teaches in the wilderness (a “desolate,” “remote” place), let’s remember that we also live by feasting on *every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD* (Dt. 8.3). May our souls be nourished as we too witness Jesus miraculously creating abundant provision in a place of hunger and isolation. And let’s gaze in awed worship as Jesus, God the Son, reminds us of His true identity in walking on the waters. Let’s begin the feast: read Mark 6.31-52.

1. These verses fill in the background, giving us a sense of the text’s context. What aspect of the surroundings does Mark emphasise (vv. 31, 32, 35)?

2. What happened to the disciples’ hoped-for, well-deserved retreat (v. 33)?

Stand in the exhausted, hungry disciples’ sandals. How would you have responded to the crowd?

3. What is Jesus’ two-fold response to this self-invited crowd (v. 34)?

Jesus saw a great crowd and He had _____ ... And He began to _____.

Through this self-disregarding tenderness, we can see “into the heart of Jesus. Indeed, the one place . . . where Jesus tells us about his *heart* is Matt 11.29: “I am gentle and lowly in heart.” Burrow in to the very core of what makes Jesus tick, and this is it. Gentleness. Compassion” (D. Ortland). How does Jesus’ compassion touch our lives today? How does it shape our behaviour?

Lesson 3

STUDY OPTION: The crowd resembled “shepherd-less sheep.” Study the OT context for this imagery; read Num.27.16-17; 1 Kings 22.17; Isa. 40.11; Jer. 3.15; 23.4. How is Messiah to be a Shepherd? Read Ezek. 34, esp. vv.23-24.

4. What problem and solution do the disciples identify and present to Jesus?

v. 35 Problem:

v. 36 Solution: “_____ them _____ ...”

5. Jesus overturns the disciples’ pre-written script for Him. What is His astounding, alternate plan? How does it contrast with the disciples’ agenda (v. 37-38)?

6. What eyewitness details embedded in vv. 39-40 make this scene spring to life before our inner eye? (Which detail also might draw a connection between Jesus’ compassion for the sheep-like crowd and the Great Shepherd of Ps. 23?)

7. How does Jesus demonstrate His dependence on His Father (v. 41)?

8. How does Mark beautifully summarise the crowd’s after-dinner state?

And they _____ ate and were _____ (v. 42; c. v. 44).

What two aspects of God’s grace are highlighted by this simple description?

Dissatisfaction spreads like a contagious disease in our culture. Is this a new epidemic? Read Deut. 8.7-11. How are spiritual amnesia and ingratitude linked with dissatisfaction? What specific habits can we cultivate so that we intentionally celebrate God’s provision for us?

8. Leftovers are just scraps we make into casseroles! Or . . . do they signify something more here? Why does Mark tell us about the leftovers (v. 43)?

"It is the mark of divine provision that it is enough, and more than enough, for all our needs" (A. Cole). Share with the group a time when God overwhelmed you by His generosity and providing care.

9. Jesus wants His followers to learn from the miraculous feeding. The night-time events (vv. 45-52) following that miraculous meal reinforce what Jesus had just revealed about Himself. To fully appreciate all that Jesus did and said, let's refresh our familiarity with some background OT passages.
- a) Review Exodus 33.18-22 (option: cf. Ex. 34.5-8; 1 Kings 19.11). What term from this account of God's self-revealing is adopted in Mark? _____
- b) Now, list some ways God's relationship with the sea is classically described in the OT. Read Job 9.8 (&10-11!); Ps. 77.19; 89.9; Isa. 43.16.
- c) Finally, consider the awesome words of Ex. 3.14, as the LORD reveals His very name to Moses (cf. Isa. 41.13). What echoes can you detect in Mark 6.50?

Jesus walking on the water was so much more than a maritime rescue operation. He was, in fact, showing His followers Who He truly is. What do both the feeding and the walking on water miracle teach us about Jesus?

10. What two part response did Jesus demand from His followers because of His presence with them as God Himself (v. 50)? What, sadly, were the disciples' responses (vv. 51-52)?

What are some ways that the power and presence of Jesus—fully God and fully human—bring you cheer and peace, even at (especially at?) your darkest hours?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE: *Immediately [Jesus] spoke to them and said, “Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid” (Mark 6.50).*
2. Ponder this delightful picture: *And Jesus got into the boat with them (Mark 6.51).*
Thank Jesus for His providing and powerful presence in your storms.
3. Use each meal this week as a trigger to thank your Father for His abundant provision in your life. You might pray the words of Psalms 145.15-16.
4. Read Psalms 93. Celebrate the wonder that our compassionate Saviour and Shepherd also is the majestic King over all He has created. Worship Him.

Lesson 4: MARK 6.53–7.23

Last week's passage poignantly concluded with the disciples still not grasping Jesus' true identity as God the Son. Their hearts were dull; their spiritual vision dim. This week we encounter two other groups who likewise failed to embrace Jesus for Who He fully is.

1. Read Mark 6.53-56. What was Jesus' reception throughout "the whole region?"

These verses portray a "consumers' spirituality," an attitude to Jesus that appears to be empty of love, worship, or commitment. "What can Jesus do for us?" seems to be motivating the self-serving, needy crowds. What does Jesus nevertheless do (v. 56)?

2. Read Mark 7.1-13. As we journey with Jesus through Mark's pages, we'll witness opposition to Him steadily mounting. Describe this delegation from Jerusalem (vv. 1, 3-4).

Mark Buchanan observes an intriguing contrast found in 6.56 and 7.4. Both Jesus and the Pharisees experience "the marketplace" and there encounter the needy and hurting ordinary people of the world. But while Jesus engages there—healing the sick, restoring the broken—the Pharisees retreat from possible contamination. What is our attitude to our "marketplaces?" Do we engage and give? Or retreat in self-protection?

3. How had Jesus' disciples offended these religious leaders (vv. 2, 5)? (Note: Had the disciples actually disobeyed the Bible's teaching?)

Lesson 4

Human weakness is to obsess over the petty and overlook the priority. So the Pharisees let habits of hand-washing overshadow a new era signalled by healings, forgiveness and restoration. And so we get more exercised about losing the remote than about child slavery. How can we keep our focus on that which is truly important--eternally important--and not on the trivial? Where are we failing as a church? As individuals?

4. What phrase, tucked into both vv. 3 and 5, reveals how the Pharisees' priorities had gone astray?

5. Jesus once again fuels His teaching with the OT Scriptures (vv.6-7). Read the verse He quotes, Isaiah 29.13. What piercing accusations about the Pharisees does Jesus make?

6. What two sources of authority and guidance for living does Jesus identify (vv. 8, 9, 13)? The _____ of God OR the _____ of men.

It's deadly easy for us to shake our fingers at the Pharisees. But what about us? In what ways do we also cherish pet theories, traditions, and personal preferences more than God's Word? How can we honour the Bible? How can we "listen . . . and understand?" (v. 14)

7. What are the inevitable and bitter outcomes of focusing on human "tradition" (vv. 8, 9, 13)?

8. What example did Jesus use to illustrate how the real purpose and true meaning of the Scriptures can be skewed (vv. 10-13)?

9. Having identified the root of the Pharisees' problem, Jesus now circles back to address their specific concern—that of defilement, or being made “unclean.”

Read vv. 14-23. What does Jesus teach about:

- a) What doesn't make us unclean / defiled? (vv. 15, 18-19)
- b) What does make us unclean? (vv. 15, 20-21)
10. Far from being located “out there,” amongst the contamination of the marketplace of life, where is the source of our uncleanness (v. 21; cf. v. 23)?

For from _____, out of the _____ ... come evil thoughts ...
“It is in the heart that the true issues of life lie” (W. Wessel).

11. Consider the catalogue of twelve “evil thoughts” contained in vv. 21-22. How many affect or injure other people?

Who is the primary injured party of every sin we commit? (Hint: See Psalms 51.4; cf. Gen. 20.6; 39.9; Lk. 15.18.)

Sin brings brokenness in its wake--not just broken rules, but broken hearts and broken relationships, between ourselves and ultimately with God. What we need is no mere surface “clean up” of our behaviour. We actually need new hearts. How has God, through Christ Jesus, provided the perfect solution to our dilemma? (cf. Ezek. 36.26)

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE: *Jesus said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart . . . come evil thoughts” (Mark 7.20-21).*
2. We are daily pummelled by information bytes, constantly bombarded by all manner of media. Examine your time investments of the past week. Have you prioritised, and thus elevated, human commentary above Scriptural authority? What can you do to remedy this lethal imbalance?
3. What are the “marketplaces” of your life—the areas where you come into contact with the needy, the broken, the hurting? Do you engage with compassion—like Jesus? Or withdraw in self-protection—like the Pharisees? *We’re called to live with new hearts . . . We’re to spend our heart’s energy not looking for ways to enter & exit the marketplace with the least amount of involvement . . . We’re to enter the marketplace looking for ways to bring God’s kingdom, light & healing into it (M. Buchanan).*
4. Immerse yourself in the lovely prayer of confession and cleansing, Psalms 51. Linger at its centre line: “Create in me a clean heart, O God.”

Lesson 5: MARK 7.24 – 8.10

Last week, Jesus' teaching left His listeners breathless, as He boldly redefined the categories of being "clean" or "unclean." This week, He continues to cross borders and challenge traditional barriers as He takes His messianic ministry outside "acceptable" boundaries. We begin to glimpse the boldness, the breadth, the sheer beauty of Jesus' gospel agenda. Let's listen and learn.

1. Our opening verses will engage you, intrigue you, perhaps dismay you. Yet they describe what has been called "one of the most moving and extraordinary incidents in the life of Jesus" (W. Barclay). Read Mark 7.24-30.

1. Tyre and Sidon, located in Gentile territory, were sophisticated, Greek-speaking centres of pagan worship. What is the significance of Jesus' departure from Israel? How does it illustrate His teaching of vv. 15, 20?

OPTIONAL: Review 1 Kings 17.8-9, 17-24. How does this OT background enrich our appreciation of Mark 7.24-30? What parallels can you detect?

OPTIONAL: Why did Jesus avoid the crowds here (v. 24)? What clues does Mark offer about Jesus' motives in minimising publicity about His ministry?

Mark 1.34; 3.11

Mark 1.43-45; 3.9, 20

Mark 6.31-32; 9.30-31

Cf. also John 6.14-15

This trip was more than a seaside excursion. It was an intentional expression of Jesus' heart for all peoples, anticipating the eventual inclusion of all people groups into God's kingdom. Read Mark 13.10 and Rev. 7.9-10. Why does the breadth of Jesus' mission matter to us? How does it impact our own life purposes?

Lesson 5

2. What two facts contained in v. 26 underscore the woman's "uncleanness" and seeming ineligibility for being included in Jesus' favour?
3. How does Mark portray her passionate and desperate faith in Jesus (v. 25, v. 26)?
4. Consider Jesus' abrupt reply (v. 27). What graphic, startling word picture (like a micro-parable) does Jesus use to refer to: His message? The Jews? The Gentiles? (Note: This Greek word for "dog" meant "pet dog, household dog.")
5. How does the word "first" make Jesus' words not a denial of her request but a (strong) statement of His current priority in ministry? What does "first" imply about the ultimate reaches of God's grace? Read Isaiah 49.6; Rom. 1.16.

"Jesus expands the scope of his ministry beyond anything conceivable of the Messiah" (J. Edwards). Here He leaps over barriers of religion, ethnicity, gender & nationality. What about our outreach, as individual Christians, as a church? Are there boundaries we need to cross, "inconceivable" barriers to penetrate?

2. Besides her address of Jesus as "Lord" (the only person to do so in Mark), why does the woman's final reply impress us? (v. 28)
3. How does Jesus respond to her persistence, insight, and faith? (v. 29) Read also Matt. 15.28.

4. Read vv. 31-37. Where does Jesus next travel (v. 31)? When did He last visit this partly Gentile area influenced by 10 cultured, Greek cities (5.18-20)?

5. Consider Jesus touching (literally!) encounter with the deaf and mute man, recorded only here in the entire NT. How does this unique account:

... highlight Jesus' tender compassion (vv. 33-34)?

... teach that Jesus beautifully fulfilled OT prophecy? See Isa. 9:1; 35:5-6.

"The first sound to emerge from a lifelong well of silence was the voice of the Son of God . . . He would never forget the voice that called Him out of silence & bewilderment into a new way of life" (A. Plass). How does Jesus' voice also call us? Cf. John 10:4

6. 10. Summarise the people's reactions to Jesus (vv. 36-37). What did they do, feel & say?

OPTION: What OT echoes do you hear? See Gen. 1:31; Isa. 35:4-6.

7. Read Mark 8:1-10. What parallels can you discern between this account and the feeding of the 5000 in 6:33-44?

8. 12. Keeping in mind the teaching of 7:24-37, and the probable location of this feeding (7:31), what is the purpose of this second miraculous feeding? Who also can "eat and be satisfied" because of Jesus' miraculous provision? How does this illustrate the woman's bold insight that the "little pet dogs" can enjoy the leftovers from the "children's" feast (7:28)?

Lesson 5

Some scholars contend that the disciples' inability to anticipate Jesus' second miraculous feeding is "proof" that this must be simply a modified re-telling of the first feeding episode. Not only does this view ignore Jesus' own testimony (8: 19-20), it also ignores human nature. Have you, like the disciples, ever had God teach you a lesson twice, or more? How are we, like the disciples, held "constantly captive to [our] own frame of reference?" (*ESV Study Bible notes for Mark 8.4*) What's the remedy?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. **MEMORISE:** *Your God will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then the lame man shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy (Isa. 35.4c-6).*
2. Like the Gentile woman, let's simply bring our needs to Jesus, believing "humbly and persistently that even the crumbs of mercy from Jesus [will] prove to provide [us] with the help [we] so desperately need" (D. Ortlund).
3. *There is a lesson here for the people of God in every age, that its enemies are neither forsaken by God nor beyond the compassion of Jesus* (J. Edwards). Who are my "enemies?" What barriers does the gospel erase?

Lesson 6: MARK 8.11 – 30

Today's text isn't meant to be an easy read for armchair spectators! Rather, our own engagement is compelled and our response commanded as we journey through four sections of text. The first two portray tragic spiritual blindness, leading finally to Jesus' dismayed cry: "Do you not yet understand?" But the concluding two sections beautifully depict a slow but certain dawning--of sight and of insight. May our own spiritual vision be sharpened as we read.

1. Read Mark 8.11-13. Once again, a glorious and miraculous display of Jesus' divine power has triggered... opposition!?! The Pharisees' scepticism and hostility break through again. Rather than seek Jesus Himself, or accept His authority, what is it they seek? What is their true motivation (v. 11)?

2. How does Jesus respond to their challenging and testing of Him (vv. 12-13)?
He _____ deeply . . .
He said . . .
 And (most chillingly), He _____ them, departing from their presence.

"Faith that depends on proof is not faith but veiled doubt" (J. Edwards). What room is there in our faith for doubts, questions, expressing objections to God? How does Scripture support your answer? What was the root problem with the Pharisees' "doubt?"

3. Read vv. 14-21. Having left the Pharisees and gained the privacy of the boat, how does Jesus caution His disciples (v. 15)?

4. Read Luke 23.8. In what specific way did both the Pharisees and Herod show arrogant disbelief?

Lesson 6

5. Jesus compares this attitude to “leaven.” How does an attitude of unbelief infiltrate a life the way a tiny lump of fermented dough “leavens” an entire batch of new dough? Can you offer any examples?
6. How do the disciples respond to Jesus’ warning? Are they “hearing” Him (v. 16)? Why not?

“The disciples had been blinded to spiritual truths by their constant preoccupation with their immediate bodily needs” (A. Cole). How is our absorption with immediate yet temporal things a source of distraction, or even delusion, in 21st century Canada?

7. “The disciples are anxious about lack of bread, but Jesus is anxious about lack of faith” (J. Edwards). What are the failings of the disciples as revealed by Jesus’ storm of questions (vv. 17-20)? How did their spiritual vision resemble that of the world’s?
8. Jesus reminds the disciples of the two recent miraculous feedings. What truth about Jesus had they failed to see with the eyes of their hearts?

Did you notice how the disciples promptly and accurately answered Jesus’ questions (vv. 19-20)? “They remembered the facts perfectly... [but] they failed to understand the significance of what had taken place before their eyes” (W. Lane). How do we, too, “see” but not perceive? How does God the Spirit help us with this insensitivity?

9. Once again, as in 7.31-35, Mark includes an intriguing account of a healing encounter with Jesus not included elsewhere in the NT (OPTION: Cf. Isa. 35.5-6 to see how both healings fulfill messianic prophecy). Read vv. 22-26. What is unique about the process of this healing (besides the spit in the eye!)?

10. What marvellous truth about Jesus' restoring work does Mark press home three times (v. 25)?

11. How does the process of the man's initial blindness, then limited and faulty sight (v. 24), followed by clear, Christ-created vision, act as a brilliant and living parable of the disciples' own oh-so-slowly dawning "sight?"

12. We now arrive, along with other Christ-followers, at the central pivot of Mark. Read vv. 27-30. Jesus initiates a pithy but powerful dialogue. What question opens it (v. 27)?

13. How do the disciples' first replies demonstrate no more comprehension than Herod and the crowds showed (v. 28; cf. 6.14-15)?

14. What personalised, confrontational question lies, not just at the heart of the Gospel, but at the heart of reality (v. 29)?
 "But who do _____ say I am?"

15. What is Peter's answer and what does that simple-seeming title signify (v. 30)?

We've arrived at the mid-point of Mark, seeing along with the disciples that Jesus is the Anointed One, the Messiah, the "Christ" (cf. 1.1). So what are the implications of Jesus' messiahship? If we are truly "Christians," then not only our name but our very identity comes from following "the Christ." In what ways are we messianic people?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. MEMORISE: Jesus asked them, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ!” (Mark 8.29)
2. Draw near to God; answer Jesus’ challenge: “Who do YOU say that I am?”
3. Donald English concludes that we are to *make the story of Jesus known in a way that helps others to test its implications for their own lives*. How am I telling the story of Jesus in and by my life? How does this invite or challenge others to encounter Jesus in a life-shaping way?
4. Create some quiet time to dwell in these lovely messianic prophecies: Isaiah 9.1-7; 11.1-10; 42.1-4; 61.1-3. Allow them to fuel your love for Christ.

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Written By Shelly Kearns