



COMMUNITY
BIBLE CHURCH

FOLLOW ME

6 Studies From Mark 8-10



Lesson 1: The Way of the Cross

Mark 8:31 - 9:1

Today's passage is one that can transform our lives. As we immerse ourselves in just these nine verses, we will find that our understanding of Who Jesus is will be deepened, and our grasp of what it means to be His follower will be strengthened. Learning and living these truths may shatter and then re-construct the way we think and the way we live. So take a deep breath, then read Mark 8:31-9:1

1. Today we embark on our journey through the second half of Mark. We quickly will find ourselves being swept up in its Cross-ward momentum. But even as we look ahead to the Cross, we must also read today's text against the background of the previous verses. Re-read Mark 8:27-30. What monumental insight about Jesus has Peter just expressed?

2. Mark's first half concludes with the resounding declaration that Jesus is the Anointed One, the Messiah. But while Peter's confession is true and God-given (Matt. 16:16-17), it's not yet complete or full. So what does Jesus begin to do next (v. 31)?

3. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 are filled with Jesus' teaching (e.g., 9:30-31; 10:1; 11:17-18). What does He now begin to teach (v. 31)? What new and disturbing insights do the disciples gain into what the Messiah *must* experience?

Compare 8:31 with 9:31 and 10:33-34. What did Jesus emphasize in His teaching?

Lesson 1

Jesus' teaching characterizes this section. He often is addressed as "Teacher" or "Rabbi." In our own spiritual journeys, what priority does Jesus have as our Teacher . . . compared with books and blogs, podcasts and celebrity preachers? Read Psalm 119:68, 102-103. What does it mean to be "taught by God?"

4. Peter, astoundingly, "rebukes" Jesus (v. 32)! "Rebuke" is a strong term, used by Mark of Jesus when He is "rebuking" demons (e.g., 1:25). Why did the prospect of Jesus the Messiah having to suffer seem so horribly wrong to Peter? Yet what was horribly wrong with Peter's thinking (v. 33)? Why does Jesus need to "rebuke" him?

Peter initially thought Jesus was mistaken about the need for suffering as the Messiah. But in his later letters, we discover that Peter eventually came to view Jesus' death as "precious" (1 Pet. 1:19) and His suffering as exemplary (2:21). Have there been times when you, too, felt that God had "got it all wrong," but later were led by Him into a truer understanding of His saving purposes?

5. Notice how Jesus addresses Peter directly, yet does so looking at the other disciples too (v. 33). How does Jesus expand his audience even further in v. 34? What might be the implications (for us) of His engaging all of the crowd in this teaching about discipleship?

6. Having taught us what it meant for Him to fulfill God's plan for His Messiahship, Jesus now helps us more fully grasp the terms of our discipleship. What does Jesus teach are the elements of genuine discipleship (v. 34)?

When we "deny ourselves," we don't just deny ourselves some one thing—like a cappuccino, or a certain TV show, or sleeping late on Sundays. Rather, "Jesus means to renounce self; to cease to make self the object of one's life and actions. This involves a fundamental reorientation . . . God, not self, must be at the centre of life (W. Wessel). How do we shift our preoccupation from self to Christ? From personal comfort to relentless pursuit of the will of God?

7. How does v. 35 clarify what it means to suffer as a disciple? Why is it more than just experiencing the annoyances and burdens of life? For whom, or for what, are we to lay down our lives?

The disciples found Jesus' teaching staggering. Shock 1: Jesus truly is the Messiah! Shock 2: The Messiah's ministry would not be one of success and triumph, but of rejection and suffering to the point of death! Shock 3: Those who would follow that Messiah also must be prepared to suffer to the point of death! As we in 21st century Canada follow Jesus, the path of discipleship will still be the way of the Cross. What does this mean for our daily lives?

8. Review vv. 36-37. What is ultimately at stake here?

9. Jesus refers to Himself in v. 38 as "the Son of Man" (cf. v.31). Read Daniel 7:13-14 for some Old Testament background of this term. How does the use of this title in 8:38 further enhance and enlarge our understanding of Jesus' (messianic) identity?

10. Discipleship calls not only for death to self, but also for courageous confession of who Jesus is. How do Jesus' words in 8:38-9:1 teach us to live with a kingdom perspective?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. *“Are you ever ashamed of Jesus? Let me be honest. I have been sometimes. There have been moments when the whole creaky edifice of Christianity has so embarrassed me that I have come close to denying my involvement with it. Leaving aside the fact that I have personally contributed to this creakiness, there is only one antidote to these feelings, and that is to do exactly what we are doing as we make our way through Mark’s writings. We must go back to the one who is the pattern for the church. We must continually return to Jesus so we can refresh our vision of who he is, what he is like and what he expects of us . . . We must stay close to Him (A. Plass). As we begin this new series of Mark studies, commit yourself afresh to deepening your walk with Jesus—our Teacher, our Messiah, our suffering Saviour.*

2. As we’ve seen with Peter this week, many times *“God’s sovereign disposition of the problems of sin and human rebellion fails to conform to the niceties of human expectations” (W. Lane).* Are there areas in your life when God’s sovereign plans fail to conform nicely to your own expectations? Talk to Him honestly about this. Ask His Spirit for wisdom.

3. *“When we come to this part of Mark’s gospel [v. 34], we are so near the heart and centre of Christian faith that we must take it almost sentence by sentence. If each day [we] could go out with only one of these phrases locked in [our] heart and dominating [our] life, it would be far more than enough to be going on with” (W. Barclay).* Each day this week, make a point of “locking in” one of the rich phrases from v. 34. Meditate on it. Let it flood your thoughts, flavour your choices, and fuel your witness!



Lesson 2: Beholding Glory

Mark 9:2-13

Today's text allows us to witness what is called "the Transfiguration". *"Here we are face to face with an incident in the life of Jesus that is cloaked in mystery"* (W. Barclay). Whenever we draw close to the intimacy between God the Father and God the Son, we do, indeed, face holy mystery. And whenever we move nearer to the glory and splendour of God, we find radiant mystery. Yet the beauty of this passage is that it also promotes clarity. For here we see Jesus the Anointed One, Jesus the Son of Man, clearly revealed as Jesus the beloved, authoritative, and glorious Son of God. Let's travel to the mountain top with the disciples, having minds open to instruction and hearts ready to worship.

1. Read Mark 9:2-8. Our passage begins with "after six days," thus linking it with the preceding passage. What previous events and teachings are we to keep in mind as we interpret today's text?

Mark 8:29, 31

Mark 8:34

Mark 8:38

Mark 9:1

2. Verse 2 simply states that Jesus was "transfigured." Briefly, but brilliantly, His concealed splendour was unveiled to the disciples. How does v. 3 describe this outward metamorphosis?

OPTION: see also Matthew 17:2 and Luke 9:29

When Peter later looked back on this dazzling display, how did he describe it? Read 2 Peter 1:16-18.

Lesson 2

Much later in his life, John was graced again by the gift of seeing Jesus, the Son of Man, in His resplendent glory. Absorb Revelation 1:12-16. How often do Jesus' magnificence and majesty flood our hearts? How can we foster a keen sense of His glory, in our personal, and in our corporate, worship?

3. Who miraculously appeared with Jesus (v.4)? Why these two out of all the Old Testament believers? Consider their roles in the Old Testament. What would their affirmation of Jesus convey to the disciples? What would the Father's commendation of (only) His unique Son in their presence say to the disciples?

4. What "overshadows" them (v. 7)? To us, a cloud merely indicates water vapour. But in the biblical tradition, what did clouds regularly symbolise? Be specific as you learn from:

Exodus 13:21

Exodus 16:10; 24:15-16a

Exodus 19:9; 24:16b

Exodus 33:9-10

5. Verse 7 surprises us! In the midst of a terrifying heavenly display, we hear words of divine tenderness. What do we learn from this staggering glimpse into the very heart of God the Father?

The three disciples had been shaken to the core by Jesus' radical teaching in the preceding days (review #1). How would this piercing and beautiful revelation of Jesus' true nature, and His Father's endorsement of Him, have strengthened them? How can this vision of Jesus likewise strengthen us in our faith commitments and own paths of discipleship?

6. Peter, overcome with terror (v. 6), bursts into speech. We're not told what reasoning lay behind his suggestion. Was he trying to fit the experience into past religious traditions, such as the Feast of Booths? Was he seeking to preserve or prolong this momentous occasion? Whatever his motivation, he was quickly corrected by God. What was to be the only appropriate response (v. 7)?

Peter was all set to construct some new little "tents" or tabernacles. But he hadn't realized that Jesus Himself WAS the new tabernacle, where God now dwells with us (Jn. 1:14)! What does it mean that in Christ Jesus, God "dwells" with us . . . here, now?

7. Read vv. 9-13. Why were the disciples to share what they'd seen only *after* the resurrection (v. 9)? What truth would they finally have absorbed (cf. 8:31)? What does this say to us? What must we also include if we are to share the gospel in its fullness?
8. What issue did the disciples raise about whether Jesus was the predicted Messiah (v. 11)? See Malachi 3:1a; 4:5-6.
9. How does Jesus respond (vv. 12-13) to their puzzlement about "Elijah's" coming (v. 12a, 13a)? Read a parallel text, Matthew 17:13. Who had been the second "Elijah," "preparing the way" (Mal. 3:1a; Mk. 1:2-4) for Jesus?

OPTION: cf. Matthew 11:13-14; Luke 1:13; 16-17.

10. Jesus likens the contours of His life and ministry with those of the first and second Elijah (vv. 11-12). What pattern can be detected, beginning with Elijah's ministry (1 Kings 19:1-3, 10), through that of the second Elijah, John the Baptist (Mk 6:14-29; 9:13), then to Jesus (v. 12, probably alluding to Isa. 52:13-53:12)? How does this pattern speak to His disciples?

Lesson 2

Jesus reminded His followers of the suffering and contempt (v. 12) awaiting Him, “lest, the disciples succumb to the glory and emotional adrenaline of the mountain rather than the necessity of the way to Jerusalem and the cross” (J. Edwards). How does this address our hearts too?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Verse 8 concludes with a lovely phrase, “*They no longer saw anyone . . . but Jesus only.*” Consider allocating a time this week for “Jesus only.” Take a media fast. Intentionally fasten your eyes on His radiant glory. Listen to Him, the beloved Son of God.
2. When you see clouds this week, move beyond meteorological musings. Let them remind you of God’s glory-filled presence, a presence that guides, reveals, and provides. Intentionally thank Him for His presence made accessible in Christ Jesus.
3. Did you know that the Greek verb used for Jesus being “*transfigured*” in Mark 9 also is used of us? “*And we all . . . beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image*” (2 Cor. 3:18). How can you be transformed as you behold His glory in Mark 9?
4. Do you wish you could have been with the three disciples on the mountain? Remember, “*The Son of Man [is] coming in clouds with great power and glory*” (Mk. 13:26; cf. 14:62). As you worship Jesus for His magnificent power and radiant glory, don’t just look back wistfully to those fleeting moments of the Transfiguration. Look ahead in wonder!



Lesson 3: Help My Unbelief

Mark 9:14-29

Today's passage offers great hope for seasoned believers who are finding that past spiritual victories are no guarantee of an ability to cope with today's trials. This narrative also encourages all who do believe in Jesus, yet feel swamped by doubt or hopelessness. For all whose faith feels feeble or even faltering—enter today's text and encounter anew Jesus, the object and giver of our faith, the One who is our strong Saviour, the One who can resurrect our frail faith. Read Mark 9:14-29.

1. Last week we experienced splendour on the heights as Jesus' radiant glory was unveiled. Now today, with three disciples, we head back down the mountain and plunge into reality. What has been happening, meanwhile, to the other disciples (vv. 14, 17-18)?

2. Consider the desperate situation described by the father. How had his son been oppressed and tormented by a demonic spirit?
 - v. 17
 - v. 18 (v. 20)
 - v. 22

3. How does the father describe the spirit's ultimate goal (v. 22)? *"From childhood . . . it has often cast him into fire and into water to _____ him."*

How did Peter later describe such satanic hatred and malice? See 1 Peter 5:8.

In light of 1 Peter 5:8, how does the Bible instruct us to live, given Satan's enmity? Lulled by familiarity, gulled by the media, have we slipped into thinking of Satan as a sort of cartoonish character who merely entices us to eat one too many Doritos? Do we forget he is a lethal enemy, a scheming adversary, a destructive accuser? (cf. 2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11; Rev. 12:9-10) How biblically accurate is our thinking about Satan? How does this affect our prayer life?

Lesson 3

4. How had the disciples failed to meet the father's (and our) expectations (v. 18)? Why would this failure have been a shock to them? Consider:

Their calling (Mk. 3:14-15)

Their equipping (Mk. 6:7)

Their track record (Mk. 6:12-13)

5. Let's skip ahead to our text's conclusion. Did you notice that the disciples haven't uttered a word since Jesus arrived? Even when Jesus asks a question (v. 16), they don't say a thing! But now, once in the house and safely in private, they burst into speech! What is their burning question (v. 28)?

6. What is Jesus' explanation of the disciples' failure (v. 29)? What does this imply about how the disciples were attempting to represent Jesus and carry on His ministry?

The ESV Study Bible comments, "[The disciples'] failure is an occasion for encouragement to more prayer . . . implying that more time and effort in prayer (and therefore in closer fellowship with God) leads to growth in faith." What a lovely thought! Every failure is an invitation to deeper prayer and fellowship. What prevents us from reacting to our failures in this way?

7. When Jesus heard that the disciples couldn't cast out the demonic spirit, how did He respond (v. 19)?

Notice how His anguished cry to the "faithless" or "unbelieving" generation is not specifically directed at any person or group. Consider the disciples, the scribes, the crowd, the father. How do each of these represent different forms of unbelief? Which represents your own?

What emotion(s) does Jesus express in v. 19? How does His lament show continuity with that of the LORD in Numbers 14:10-11?

From the time of the Israelites, to the time of Jesus, to the 21st century, unbelief consistently both grieves the heart of God and robs us of joyous life in Christ. One commentator, writing about faith in Mark 9, claims “Disbelief of Jesus . . . is both a greater opposition and more serious obstacle than all the hosts of pandemonium!” (J. Edwards). Unbelief pollutes the very air our culture breathes like a spiritual smog. How are we subtly influenced by this?

8. This theme of belief / disbelief is further explored in vv. 23-24. What incredible truth about belief does Jesus now teach to “the unbelieving generation” gathered around Him?

Jesus is not advocating the power of positive thinking! Rather, He is teaching us that, “We must refuse to set limits on what can be accomplished through the power of God” (W. Lane). How is this another way of explaining Mark 6:5-6?

9. How did the father’s immediate, passionate prayer acknowledge both the power of Jesus and the reality of his own spiritual condition (v. 24)?

Calvin wrote, “These two statements may appear to contradict each other but there is none of us that does not experience both of them in himself.” Why is it helpful, even healing, to acknowledge the presence of doubt, mingled with belief, in our hearts? Why do we shy away from such honesty? How does such a confession open us to experiencing Jesus’ provision?

10. Earlier, the despairing father had begged Jesus for His compassion and His help (v. 22). How do Jesus’ authoritative words and healing touch beautifully answer both components of that request (vv. 25, 27)?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. This week, consciously adopt the father's cry as your daily prayer: "I believe; Help my unbelief!" Keep in mind that *"in the tangle of the human heart, we sometimes do believe and disbelieve at the same moment. That is, until . . . someone appears to help us with our disbelief . . . To pray is to totally give the situation over to God, allowing his power to redeem the situation"* (M. Card). Be honest about doubt; ask Jesus for His help.
2. *"The disciples had been equipped with power direct from Jesus Himself but they had not nurtured power with prayer . . . [We] . . . enrich whatever gifts God has given us by continual contact with God who gave them"* (W. Barclay). Consider your walk of faith. How is your lived-out salvation—all of which is sheer God-gift—enriched by your continual contact with the Father? What specific step(s) this week would give prayer a greater role in nourishing belief in Jesus?
3. The disciples allowed unbelief to fuel their self-reliance . . . and the result was failure. Their past spiritual triumphs blinded them to their need for reliance on God's power for each new situation. Evaluate your heart. Is there an area where you are subtly relying on your own ability or past success, rather than abandoning yourself in faith to the power of God?



Lesson 4: Like a Little Child

Mark 9:33-42; 10:13-16

This week's study revolves around children and "little ones." We'll have the privilege of watching Jesus show attentive regard and tender love to individuals whose own society considered them to be insignificant and distracting. But we won't be wallowing in sentiment. Because even as He was cradling the little ones, Jesus also was teaching some pretty potent lessons . . . lessons that strike at our hearts' core instincts. Let's listen to Jesus this week, and learn.

1. Read Mark 9:33-37. Last study, we witnessed the disciples arguing with the scribes (v. 14). And this study? They're still at it! What are they now arguing about (v. 34)?

Why is this particular source of dispute sadly ironic given the lessons they've just been taught (vv. 28-29, 31)?

2. When Jesus questions His disciples about their reason for argument, they "kept silent" (v. 34). Why? Again, how does this remind you of the preceding event in their lives?

The disciples are focused on "greatness," jockeying for power, prestige, and position. Before we shake our heads at their folly, maybe we should look around us! What are some ways our own culture exposes its preoccupation with personal greatness and status? How does our life in Christ begin to curb our instincts for (even subtle) self-promotion?

3. Review vv. 30-31a. What was Jesus intentionally doing during this period of His ministry?

Lesson 4

What important truths does He now teach about how to be great, or “first,” in the kingdom (v. 35)? How did Jesus Himself provide a pattern for these kingdom values of greatness?

How does Jesus then memorably illustrate His teaching (vv. 36-37)?

Who are the types of individuals in our contemporary lives whom society might consider to be of little value or significance? How can we “receive” or “welcome” (NIV) them in Jesus’ name? How does this become humbling, making us “servants?”

4. What are the full implications of “receiving” Jesus? (v. 37; for more teaching about the intimate connection between Father and Son, cf. John 12:44-45)

“The humblest act of kindness sets off a chain reaction that shakes heaven itself . . . whatever is done to the little & least is done to Jesus; whatever is done to Jesus is done to God!” (J. Edwards) How would absorbing fully this staggering truth re-shape our attitudes of honouring others, even the “undeserving?”

5. Read Mark 9:38-42. The disciples immediately encounter someone who is not great in their eyes. Whom do they meet? What was he doing? How (v. 38)? (Keep in mind the irony of this situation; review vv. 17-18)

6. Why do the disciples object to him? Notice the condemning detail of v. 38!

“He was not following _____.”

Review Mark 1:17, 18. What foundational lesson about discipleship had the disciples forgotten?

One of the hazards we face as Christians is the potential to feel entitled or privileged compared with others. What are some ways we as evangelicals might look down on other Christians because they are not "one of us?" How does Jesus' teaching (vv. 39-40) correct our attitudes?

7. Run your eye over vv. 37, 38, 39. What recurring phrase links the two events? What does this phrase mean? How does Colossians 3:17 broaden the application of this phrase?

8. How does v. 41 shed light on what is to be our motivation in giving? How is this a far cry from guilt-induced or pity-driven giving?

9. The sharp warning of v. 42 may refer back to the child of vv. 36-37, or the "little one" of v. 38, or perhaps both. Either way, what point does Jesus dramatically make about the gravity of harming or hindering one who is vulnerable or weak in their faith life?

10. We conclude today by reading Mark 10:13-16, a lovely little passage which again showcases Jesus' generous and expansive love against the narrowness of His followers. What point is Jesus making here through the children? Does He actually say that the kingdom belongs to children? What attributes is He commending?

11. We've already thought about "receiving" Jesus through our humble service and acceptance of the lowly (9:37). Now, what gift are we to "receive" like a little child (10:15)? How do kids merit gifts from their parents? Do they even "earn" them at all? How do kids receive gifts? What can we learn from them?

12. Our study this week concludes with a “picture” that is unique to Mark. What eyewitness detail, found only here and in 9:36, make this narrative especially delightful (10:16)?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Using the criterion of selfless service to the insignificant and status-less, how have you “welcomed” Jesus over the past month? Adopt Mark 9:37 as your template, and spend some time talking with your Father about how you can pursue kingdom, not worldly, greatness.
2. Are you feeling sick and tired of what seems like unendingly tedious and trivial service? Copy out Mark 9:41 and focus on it each morning this week. Let it hearten you that even a tiny act of love, such as pouring a glass of water, does not go unnoticed by your Father!
3. Memorise Colossians 3:17. Consider: *“For all who share in the extension of Jesus’ work, . . . there are no distinctions between “trivial” and “important” tasks. There is only faith and obedience, shown in devotion to Jesus, and wherever those qualities exist, they call forth the approval of God”* (W. Lane).
4. Does your attitude to kids (even your own!) mirror that of Jesus’ contemporaries? That they irritate, distract, having no value or status? Or is it closer to Jesus’ loving embrace of them? Pray for some of the kids in your life—that like Jesus, you would love them, bless them, and encourage them to draw nearer to Him.



Lesson 5: Leaving it All and Following

Mark 10:17-31

This passage builds on and expands the message of the preceding verses. Last study, Jesus taught us that children model for us how to receive God’s kingdom—with open, empty, receptive hands. Children don’t try to earn gifts. Instead, helpless and humble, they simply and eagerly accept gifts, looking to the Giver with dependence and delight. Today we’ll meet someone whose approach to the Kingdom, and life in Christ sadly contrasts with the children’s attitude. Let’s listen and learn from Jesus about how to receive treasure from Him.

1. Read Mark 10:17-22. As this encounter opens, what details lead us, initially, to form a favourable impression of this earnest, respectful man (v. 17)?

Yet, how is the man’s question (v. 17) revealing . . .

About what he hasn’t yet learned about the kingdom of God?

About whom he is trusting for eternal life?

*This man didn’t see that Jesus in Himself brought the kingdom of God near, or that eternal life was wrapped up in acceptance of Him. Rather than **receive**, he sought to **achieve**. What about us? What are some areas where we still try to achieve (by our own efforts) in our walk of faith, rather than receive? How can we foster a posture of open and empty handedness?*

2. We have seen often in Mark how Jesus uses questions to provoke thought and shatter complacent assumptions. Yet, the reply Jesus fires back in v. 18 might seem somewhat abrupt. Why is it so critical (literally a matter of life and death) that this man move beyond seeing Jesus as “good” and as merely a “teacher?” To what insight(s) is Jesus drawing him?

Lesson 5

3. What's the point of reviewing this string of commandments (v. 19)? How could this lead the young man to realize how he'd fallen short of God's goodness (cf. Rom. 3:20b)? Which commandments are not included here?

4. The man's prompt response reeks of self-delusion and self-righteousness. Refresh your memory of Jesus' comments on inwardly obeying the law. Read Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28. How has this man obeyed the technical, outer "letter" of the law, while not observing its spirit?

5. Review v. 21. There is a lovely detail here, contained only in Mark, about what Jesus was feeling at this moment. What is it? How does knowing this enable us to interpret Jesus' reason for His demand of v. 21?

Giving his wealth to the poor wouldn't be what "bought" this man eternal life, or "treasure in heaven." But until he took this momentous step, wealth would be the obstacle hindering him from what would bring eternal life—following Jesus (v. 21). Read Revelation 3:17. What are ways our wealth (and the comfort and security it represents) blinds us also to our true condition?

6. What detail about the man does Mark only now relate (v. 22)? Jesus loved this man (v. 21) but what did this man love? What does his tragic departure from Jesus reveal about how the wealthy man also fell short of the first commandment (Ex. 20:3)?

7. Read vv. 23-27. What is Jesus' main point in vv. 23-25?

OPTION: cf. Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:9-10

Jesus' teaching can be far from soothing. It may be shocking, even shattering. Why are the disciples so dumbfounded here by His teaching (vv. 24, 26)?

8. As He has before (e.g., 9:42), Jesus now uses a dramatic and extreme statement to emphasize a point. What graphic image does He use here, and what is its effect (v. 25)?

Jesus' teaching intrigues and engages us. He unfolds captivating parables. He stimulates our minds with penetrating questions, and captures our imaginations by vivid word pictures. Jesus' teaching was colourful, creative, and compelling. Is ours? How do we share Christ with others? Is our sharing likewise "seasoned with salt . . . wholesome, alive, constructive speech, more like a flavoursome Indian curry than bland, safe speech as interesting as yesterdays' leftover porridge?" (D. Lennon). How can we be creative in how we engage others in talk about Jesus?

9. What question is Jesus specifically answering in v. 27? How does this clarify the declaration Jesus makes in v. 27?

Why should this "theology of hope" (W. Lane) energize and encourage us in our efforts to share the gospel with our family and friends?

10. Read vv. 28-31. How does Peter contrast the other disciples and himself favourably with the rich man (v. 28)? How does v. 31 both comfort and challenge Peter (and us)?

11. Just as Jesus saw into the rich man's heart, He also knows the hearts of His followers. What motivation should fuel His disciples' sacrificial following and living (v. 29)?

12. Unpack the riches of Jesus' words in vv. 29-30. What hints are there of the painful realities entailed in following Jesus (vv. 29, 30)? How does our participation in the family of God figure into experiencing now some of our reward? How is our reward divided between the present and the eternal?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Memories Mark 10.27. Let this truth saturate your thoughts until it lightens your discouragement over those loved ones who seem so resistant to Jesus. No matter how unlikely an individual's coming to Christ might seem, *"the last word is not gloomy. There is an optimism of grace. God can do what humans cannot"* (D. English).
2. As Jesus interacted with the seeking, wealthy man, He tailored His conversation to the contours of this man's very soul. Pray for spiritual sensitivity this week, that you would engage with others like Jesus did—loving them and sharing the story of Jesus in a way that fits their spiritual condition.
3. *"The kingdom of God topples our cherished priorities and demands of disciples new ones. It takes from those who follow Jesus things they would keep, and gives to them things they could not imagine!"* (J. Edwards). Look at your life. What "cherished priorities" of yours might be hindrances to how you follow Jesus?
4. Choose a country of the world where you know believers regularly face persecution for the sake of Christ. Pray daily this week for your brothers and sisters there.



Lesson 6: Recover My Sight!

Mark 10:32-52

“To know Jesus is to follow Him, even on the way of suffering” (J. Edwards).

This week’s passage chronicles Jesus and the disciples as they conclude their travels together towards Jerusalem and the momentous events that will unfold there. Jesus will once again instruct us about what it means to follow in His steps. Not only does He teach us, He shows us that He will lead the way for us, in love, generosity and self-sacrifice. The question that remains is: Are we following?

1. Read Mark 10:32-34. Compare vv. 17, 32, 46 and 52. What is the setting for this block of narrative in Mark? What will be the final destination and why is this significant (11.1)?

2. Once again, let’s savour the richly personal details of Mark’s account (v. 32). Consider:
 - a. The disciples. What emotions were they undergoing in this final journey with Jesus?

 - b. Jesus. Only Mark includes the poignant detail that Jesus walked ahead, alone. How does this vivid image nourish love & awe for Jesus (cf. Lk. 9:51)?

3. In vv. 33-34, we re-visit the last of Jesus’ three predictions of His death and resurrection (cf. 8:31; 9:31). Now read vv. 35-45. How does this detailed prophecy of Jesus’ coming sufferings affect how we read the following verses?

4. Against the backdrop of Jesus’ impending death, the crass greed of James and John shocks us (notice the same pattern in 9:31, 34). How does the brothers’ demand reveal their heart condition and spiritual blindness (vv. 35, 37)?

Lesson 6

“We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you!” Sound familiar? Does this spirit of petty, personal greed stain our own prayers too? What practices can help protect us against such ego-centric, gain-oriented prayer?

5. In Jesus' refusal of the brothers' request, He refers to *drinking the cup* (v. 38), a turn of phrase familiar to His hearers but not to us. Someone's "cup" often meant a God-given lot or destiny. But here, this phrase likely also carries overtones from its Old Testament background. What specifically is represented by "the cup" in Psalm 75:7-8 and in Isaiah 51:17?

How could it be said that Jesus drank from the cup of suffering and God's wrath? Read Mark 14:36 and Romans 5:6-9.

What caused this wrath (Rom. 1:18)?

Many of us shy away from the terrifying image of God's wrath. Yet the fact of God's settled hatred and punishment of sin runs throughout the Bible. How does making room in our theology for God's wrath drastically deepen our appreciation for what Christ bore for us on the cross? How does it invest participating in Communion with heartfelt meaning? (cf. 1 Cor. 11:26) Secondly, bearing in mind the context of the pride expressed through the request of James and John, how does God's wrath deal a mortal blow to our own pride?

6. Consider vv. 38-39. Obviously Jesus' cup and baptism included suffering and wrath-bearing that were uniquely His as the Christ, the Messiah. But in what limited way would James and John, and all other disciples, come to share in Jesus' suffering?
7. Jesus is about to teach further on humility and loving service. How is His attitude of humility demonstrated even by the words of His refusal in v. 40 (cf. Jh. 5:30; 8:29)?

8. How do the other disciples betray that their desires aren't much better than James' and John's (v. 41)?

9. How does Jesus describe society's attitude toward power and privilege (v. 42)? How are Jesus' followers to contrast with their surrounding culture (vv. 43-44)? How are we doing?

Jesus referred to His sacrificial death as a "ransom" (v. 45), a term usually referring to the price paid to free (or "redeem") a slave or hostage. Think through the implications of this. Not only does Jesus call us to be servants (slaves even!), He points to His own example of sacrificing Himself in order to ransom us (us captive slaves of sin). How does this colour the way we think about ourselves and others? How does it motivate our daily choices?

10. This section of Mark has focused on the marginalised "little ones," those treated as worthless and weak. Now we find yet another healing of a blind man (cf. 8:22-26). Read vv. 46-52; list all you glean about Bartimaeus' life. Why is he "*a living parable of childlike helplessness . . . [knowing] there is nothing he can do to earn or deserve anything*" (M. Card)?

11. While James and John seek glory, what does Bartimaeus seek (vv. 47, 48)? How does Bartimaeus address Jesus? What do his words indicate about his (in)sight and faith?

v. 47

v. 48

v. 51

"The kingdom of heaven . . . is not for the well-meaning, but the desperate. Bartimaeus is desperate and his desperation is a doorway to faith . . . He shouts . . . The original Greek reads, 'And Jesus stood still.' How remarkable that the Son of Man allows the cries of a poor and powerless person to stop him in his tracks" (J. Edwards). How do we respond when the demands of a needy "little one" interrupt our plans? How can we help bring the desperate to Jesus?

12. Jesus' initial reply to Bartimaeus is identical to his response to the brothers (cf. vv. 36, 51). Yet what is the final outcome of their encounter (v. 52)? As this section of Mark concludes, we find that like Bartimaeus, we have gained a fresh vision of Jesus and renewed opportunity to follow Him. What elements of discipleship does Bartimaeus model for us?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1. Memorize Mark 10:45: *For even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*
2. Use Jesus' prayer of Matthew 6:9-13 as an outline for your own prayer times this week. Notice that although this prayer acknowledges personal need (*Give us this day our daily bread*), it also protects us from being petty or ego-centric.
3. *"It is those who know their need, not those who assume their superiority, on whom God pours his mercy"* (D. Ortlund). In what areas of life do you need Jesus' mercy? What struggles reduce you to hopelessness? Bring these areas of desperation to the Lord, and rest in Him.
4. Whom can you serve this week . . . with a servant's heart and a slave's humility?

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