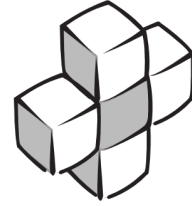




SMACC
Making Disciples of Jesus Christ



Bible Study Series:

Mark

Leaders' Notes



Our Mission:

*To glorify God together in response to his grace
by making disciples of Jesus Christ*

About These Studies

These studies were written by various SMACC leaders for use among young working adults and university students. You are most welcome to use and adapt these studies for your own context. Where you do so please provide the following acknowledgment.

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These studies are written as a companion to the sermon series available at: https://smacc.stmaryscathedral.org.my/sermons/?wpfc_sermon_series=mark

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Study 1: “Jesus: Who is He and Why He Came” (Mark 1:1-13)

Getting started

1. Before we dive into the text of the gospel, share one thing (fun facts) you know about the book.
 - It is the shortest gospel out of the 4 gospels
 - It is a “busy” book, Mark uses the word “immediately” 40 times in the book – we see Jesus as a servant, busy meeting his Father’s command.
 - The emphasis is on the deeds of Jesus – picturing Jesus in action

Digging in

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
1:1-5	The beginning of the gospel starting with the ministry of John the Baptist
1:6-8	John the Baptist: the man and his message
1:9-11	The baptism of Jesus
1:12-13	Jesus’s temptation in the wilderness

Read Mark 1:1-5

3. How did Mark start the book? And what did he establish the book is about?

About the gospel of Jesus Christ – the Son of God.

It is clearly about a good news of :

Jesus : a genuine, historical person walked on earth, just like other men.

Christ: Messiah; the anointed savior of man

Son of God: God’s only Son which he is well pleased (v11)

4. Read Malachi 3:1, Isaiah 40:3 Who is the messenger the Prophets in the Old Testament prophesy about? What is his mission?

According to Isaiah 40: 3, there will be a Messenger (finally another prophet after 300 years of silence from God) who is later known as John the Baptist. And his mission is to prepare the way of the Lord.

5. How did John the Baptist prepare the way for the Lord?

He came baptizing in the wilderness, preaching a baptism for the remission of sins.

6. How was the response of John’s ministry and what does it signifies?

Many from the land of Judea and Jerusalem came and confess their sins, repenting of their sinfulness and prepare for the coming of the promised Messiah.

It represents a fulfilment of the promise of a new exodus, in which Israel is delivered from the wilderness to receive God’s promise of salvation. God is working in people’s hearts, calling them to turn back to Himself, in preparation for the coming Messiah

Read Mark 1:6-8

7. How did John describe the man who is coming after him, and how is he so mighty?

A man who is coming is both human (wearing sandals) and divine (baptising with the Holy Spirit). He is so mighty even John is not worthy to tie the strap of his sandals (which is something done only by a lowly servant).

8. Who is the person John is mentioning about?

Jesus, who is the Lord.

9. What's the difference between the baptism done by John the Baptist and Jesus? Read Romans 8:9-11. What does this mean to us now?

John's baptism could demonstrate repentance, but it could not truly cleanse one from sin, nor could it impart the Holy Spirit in the way Jesus would after His work on the cross was completed.

Rom 8 shows us that the baptism by the Holy Spirit points to the same thing - repentance and living rightly.

Read Mark 1:9-11

10. When Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan, what happened? And what does it signify?

Heaven open wide, the spirit descends on Jesus like a dove, and a voice (God the Father) came from heaven declaring Jesus is His beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.

We also see the Trinity presence in the scene : God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

11. Why did Jesus needs to be baptised? Isn't he sinless?

Even God the Father declared from heaven that Jesus is His beloved Son and he is well pleased with him signifies that Jesus is perfect, unlike sinful men. However he was baptized to be identified with sinful men.

12. We see the beginning of Jesus's ministry, how was it?

It is a humble beginning,

Jesus: a common man

From Nazareth: An unremarkable village

Was baptized: identified with sinful men

In Jordan: an unremarkable river

However at the same time it also displays glory:

Heaven open wide, the spirit descends on Jesus like a dove, and a voice (God the Father) came from heaven declaring Jesus is His beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased.

Read Mark 1:12-13

13. What happens immediately?

Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness for 40 days whereby he is tempted by Satan and the wild animals. And the angels ministered to Him.

14. What do these events signify?

In the wilderness for forty days, tempted by Satan and was with wild beasts.

Jesus was not only with sinners in baptism, he was also identified with sinners in their temptations. 40 is a number that signifies testing or judgement (i.e. Noah's flood : 40 days and 40 nights, Israel was in the wilderness for 40 years). Hence this 40 days is Jesus's time of testing.

Application

15. So far in the Gospel of Mark we see four witnesses testifying to Jesus, can you spot who are they?

- Mark: Jesus is the Son of God (1:1)

- Prophets said Jesus is Lord (1:2-3)

- John the Baptist: the one who is mightier than I (1:7-8)

- God the Father: My beloved Son, whom I am well pleased (1:10-11)

16. Who is Jesus in our life?

After looking at different witnesses testifying who Jesus is, the most important question to ask ourselves is who is Jesus in our heart and our life.

Prayer

Thank God that we have the great privilege to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ who is the Son of God as proclaimed by not only Mark, John the Baptist but God the Father himself. And thank you for all the things He has come to earth to fulfilled resulting in us receiving the great gift of life all because of God's grace for us. Let us remind each other of who Jesus is in our life.

Study 2: “The Authority of Jesus” (Mark 1:14-1:45)

Getting started

1. Think of an authoritative figure. Can you separate this person’s authority from his/her identity?

Context

Previously, we saw the many testimonies of Jesus - Mark testifies that Jesus is the Christ (God’s chosen king), John the Baptist said that Jesus is much mightier and God the Father declared that Jesus is His beloved Son.

Digging in

Read Mark 1:14-45.

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
V14-15	Jesus preaches Good News.
V16-20	Jesus shows His authority over men.
V21-22	Jesus shows His authority to teach God’s Word.
V23-28	Jesus shows His authority over unclean spirits.
V29-34	Jesus shows His authority to heal diseases.
V35-39	The reason Jesus came / What He came to do
V40-45	Jesus shows His authority to cleanse.

Read Mark 1:14-15

3. “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” How is this Good News? (cf. Daniel 2:44)

According to Daniel 2:44, God would establish an indestructible kingdom that will stand forever - God’s kingdom was promised and is now very near! Mark began the gospel by testifying that Jesus is the Christ, God’s chosen King and now he announces the coming of God’s Kingdom. There can only be a kingdom if there is a king - the king is here

Read Mark 1:16-20

4. How did the fishermen respond to Jesus when He called? What does that show about Jesus? These fishermen left their nets and immediately followed Jesus. They didn’t consider the fact that they were leaving behind their jobs; their source of income. The key word here is “immediately”. Jesus’ call almost seems like an order from a military officer. He says it, and those who hear it obey. We start to see signs of his authority over men. Do you see any other response? - Look at Zebedee.

Read Mark 1:21-22

5. How is it that people could tell Jesus taught differently from the scribes? What does that mean? V22 He taught as one who had authority unlike the scribes. Judaism had become a book religion, and the scribe had authority because of his erudition in sacred Scripture and tradition. He did not claim direct revelation from God but was an interpreter and had influence only as a learned man (Garland). The people of that time identified the words of Jesus to be a new teaching and with authority. Even back then, only God's Word or teachings from God's Word had authority. If Jesus is said to teach with authority, then He teaches with God's authority

Read Mark 1:23-28

6. How did all these groups react toward Jesus when he taught and casted out demons in the synagogue?

Reactions toward Jesus	
People of Capernaum	V22- they were astonished at his teaching V27- they were amaze
Demons	V23b-24c Cried out (in fear) V24d - they knew who Jesus was V26- obeyed Jesus' command

Read Mark 1:29-34

7. Consider the way Simon's mother-in-law behaves after being healed by Jesus? What is our attitude toward God and how do we behave after recovering from an illness or disease?

Good to discuss how Simon's mother-in-law responded in humility by serving others in her recovered state. Do we thank God for His healing (sometimes through medication)? Do we use our God-given health to serve others or ourselves?

8. Why did Jesus prohibit the demons to speak even though they knew exactly who he was?

After the episode in the synagogue, Jesus became famous and people would have thought of him as an authoritative teacher and exorcist (V28). In this mass healing outside Simon's door, people would probably just recognise Him for His healing abilities. If the demons told everyone that He was the Messiah, they will associate the Messiah primarily with healing, amazing teaching and exorcism. That's not the main reason why Jesus came.

Read Mark 1:35-39

9. What was the Messiah concerned with primarily?

Preaching the gospel. Make sure they get reference from text.

10. Read Lev 13:46. Why does Jesus cleanse the leper and what are the implications?

The Levitical law has a strong position on lepers: they are considered unclean and not allowed to live within the city with the rest of society. That also means that they aren't allowed into the Temple or the synagogue to worship congregationally. Jesus was moved with pity for the leper to cleanse him. The leper can now again be with God's people. To further facilitate discussion, you may ask the group, isn't it strange that Jesus touched the leper with his own hand? Num 19:22 shows that anyone who touches anything unclean will become unclean. However, we see here that Jesus does not become unclean. In fact, the leper becomes clean. Who could do such a miracle?

Application

11. What does it mean to repent and believe in the gospel?

12. What are our attitudes toward Jesus? Have we been treating Him rightly?

At this point, everyone should have a clear idea of the extent of Jesus' authority. Despite that, we might be treating Jesus like circus monkey whom we would like to see perform miracles or teach well. Perhaps we ignore Him when he calls us to follow him (Zebedee).

13. What do we need to repent of and what would our lives look like if we believe in the gospel?

Don't pressure people to answers here but it's good to reflect on practical ways to be following Jesus and being accountable to one another. Splitting into smaller groups of 2 or 3 will be better. And then pray for each other.

Prayer

Thank God that our Lord Jesus came to preach the gospel with such urgency that we might repent and believe. Pray that we will recognise and acknowledge His authority over our lives and the world that we live in by submitting to Him. Ask God for help to continue turning away from sin and turn to Him instead.

Study 3: “Christ Our Saviour” (Mark 2:1-17)

Getting started

1. Share of a time you had a “holier-than-thou” moment. How did you feel during that moment of time?

(This is in relation to the Pharisees in vv. 15-17)

Context

Last week, we saw that Jesus, the son of God, the King appointed by God, came to the world in the form of a man to proclaim the gospel. He called men to repent and believe for the Kingdom of God is near! We also saw that Jesus has authority over all things, even the power to cleanse the outcast so that he (the leper) can once again join the congregation to worship God—a foreshadow of what Christ would do on the cross to bring reconciliation between men and God! Throughout the study, we saw that Jesus came not to be a cool miracle worker/ an awesome political messiah, BUT for one sole purpose: To preach the good news! This week, we will continue to find out more about Jesus, his identity and his mission.

Digging in

Read Mark 2:1-17

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title

Read Mark 2:1-5

3. Based on what we read so far, what are some possible intentions the crowd may have in gathering so eagerly wherever Jesus is?

Based on what Jesus have previously did in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34), though it is an encouraging sight to see that so many people are eager to gather wherever he goes, they may have wrong intentions in coming. Many of them perhaps only came for healing or perhaps just curious to know who this man is. Yet, Jesus preached to them instead.

4. What is it about “their faith” that Jesus saw in verse 5?

The four men were eager to seek help for their paralytic friend, carrying him up the roof and letting him down to meet Jesus, in whom they have faith in to recover their friend’s paralysis. They

knew Jesus could heal and had compassion on others. (Mark 1:41) Seeing that they are willing to go through so much trouble for their friend, Jesus accepted and commended their faith

5. Why did Jesus said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven” instead of healing him first? You would think that the obvious need for healing would be his physical body, but instead Jesus says to him that his sins are forgiven. Think about how it shows us what Jesus is more concerned about. Do we see it the same way?

Read Mark 2:6-12

6. On what basis did the scribes say that Jesus is blaspheming? They had their doctrines right—it is a blasphemy for anyone to forgive sins, as that right only belongs to God himself. They had a problem with it because Jesus was implying that He had God’s authority to forgive sins/that he is God. In Mark 1, Jesus proved himself to have divine power. And yet, for the scribes, they still remain ignorant of who Jesus is.

7. What does verse 8 tell us about Jesus? The scribes were questioning in their hearts, yet Jesus perceived in the spirit what they were thinking. This proves him to be God, it proves him to have the right and power to forgive sins. He very well know the sinful hearts of men, yet still ready to graciously forgive sin.

8. What point is Jesus trying to make in verse 9-10? Why does he refer to himself as the Son of Man? (cf. Daniel 7:13-14) This further shows Jesus’ authority to forgive sins as he has demonstrated having the power and authority to heal the paralytic. The ‘Son of Man’ was the name given to a man in Daniel 7 who came to God and was given the kingdom of God, having eternal dominion authority over all people.

9. What was the response of the crowd in verse 12? There seems to be a positive response. He went out before them all (including the scribes) and they were all amazed, and glorified God!

Read Mark 2:13-17

10. What does verse 14-16 tell us about:

Jesus	<p><u>- His authority over men (calling Levi, aka Matthew, to follow him)</u> <u>- His mission is to save sinners.</u> In Jewish tradition, to accept an invitation to dine together implied a willingness to become a close friend of the host. Jesus’ table fellowship with sinners showed that he shows no partiality to who he loves, which further emphasizes who he have come to save</p>
Tax Collector & Sinners	<p><u>-Seen by the scribes of the Pharisees as a wrong to associate with them.</u> Perhaps generally those who does not keep the Law are ones that the scribes of the Pharisees regard as sinners as well. Yet, Jesus graciously called Levi to follow him.</p>
Scribes of Pharisees	<p><u>-Despised tax collector</u> Tax collectors are well known to oppress, take bribes, and accuse falsely for taxes collect from their fellow Jews, for Rome.</p>

11. In verse 17, is Jesus suggesting that the scribes of the Pharisees are righteous as compared to those Jesus is dining with?

No one is righteous. Yet, self-righteous people such as these Pharisees saw no need for true righteousness because they see themselves as righteous. If the world had been righteous, then there is no need for the coming of Jesus to preach repentance and deliver us from sin. Here, Jesus once again clearly states the reason of his coming, which is to save this sinful world. These Pharisees do not see themselves as sinners, but these “tax collectors and sinners” own themselves to be sinners and are glad to be encouraged to repent.

Application

12. In light of today’s study, what are some things you have learned about Jesus today? Share one or two ways in which you might be challenged to have a change in your attitude towards Jesus.

Jesus is the Son of Man, who has authority to forgive sins. He has come to save not the righteous but sinners.

13. Do you present yourself as a Pharisee or as a tax collector? How do you identify others?

Get them to think back on their answers in the Getting Started question.

14. From the first part of today’s passage, we know that every person’s greatest need is to have their sins forgiven. Reflect and share on how that changes the way in which we relate to our family and friends.

What do we think their greatest need is: happiness, success, comfort, or to be saved? Get them to think about their conversations with family and friends.

Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13)

Study 4: “Jesus vs the Pharisees” (Mark 2:18-3:6)

Getting started

1. “Christians are a group of bigots who only seek to impose burdensome and unnecessary rules on other people.” Comment on the statement. Why is the misconception so common?

Context

In the previous study, we saw how Jesus heals a paralytic, while declaring that his sins are forgiven as well. This declaration drew the ire of the scribes who thought Jesus was blaspheming since only God can forgive sins. Later on, He passed by a tax collector by the name of Levi, who immediately chose to follow Him after Jesus asked him to follow Him. This week, we will be looking at how Jesus continues to draw the ire of the Pharisees.

Digging in

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
2:18-20	Pharisees vs Jesus on fasting
2:21-22	Jesus’ NEW way vs the Pharisees’ OLD traditions.
2:23-28	Pharisees vs Jesus on working on the Sabbath
3:1-6	Pharisees vs Jesus on healing on the Sabbath

3. From the text, what issue sparked confusion, which led to people questioning Jesus?
Fasting - which John’s and the Pharisees’ disciples practised, but not Jesus’ disciples. Because Jesus was widely perceived as a religious teacher like the Pharisees and John – it was confusing to them that His disciples weren’t practising this act of ‘righteousness’.
4. How does Jesus answer their question? Is it contrary to what’s mentioned in the Old Testament? (cf. 1 Samuel 31:13, 2 Samuel 1:12, Esther 4:3)
With a parable about a bridegroom and the guests at the wedding. Just as a wedding is a joyful occasion, Jesus’ presence with them is also something to be celebrated with joy. There’s no place for fasting just yet, since fasting is a form of mourning (rather than an act of righteousness) – as shown in 1 Sam. 31:13, 2 Sam. 1:12 and Esther 4:3.

Jesus’ teaching was not contrary to the Old Testament – fasting was not required except on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:29, 23:27, 29). However, the Pharisees had a tradition of fasting twice a week, encouraging others to do the same – hence the widespread perception that fasting was an act of religiosity and righteousness.
5. What is the significance of Jesus’ usage of the imagery of Him being the bridegroom? (cf. Isaiah 54:5, 62:4-5)

In the Old Testament, God uses the picture of a wedding/marriage to describe His close relationship with His people. Jesus uses the same imagery to identify himself as God and His closeness to the people.

6. What was Jesus hinting at in v20? Was Jesus putting a requirement on His disciples to be fasting on 'that day'?

Jesus was hinting (the first hint in Mark) that the day will come when He will be taken away from them and suffer a violent death on the cross as the Servant. Following the explanation of what fasting is – it wouldn't make sense to say that Jesus required them to do practice it; rather, Jesus was saying that they would be mourning His death.

7. What does the old garment / wineskin and the unshrunk cloth / new wine refer to? What point was Jesus trying to get across?

Old garment/wineskin – Judaism; unshrunk cloth/new wine – Jesus' new ways. Trying to incorporate Jesus' new teachings into Judaism will not work. Jesus didn't come to 'patch up'/reform Judaism – this old system would not be able to 'contain' Jesus. Rather, Jesus came to fulfill the law, superseded it and brought the new age of salvation.

8. Was the Pharisees' accusation of Jesus' disciples doing what was 'not lawful' on the Sabbath accurate? Why or why not?

Jesus' disciples, in 'plucking the heads of grain', were doing 'work' – according to the Pharisees' interpretation and hence breaking the law.

9. What was the link between what David did and what Jesus' disciples did – what point was Jesus making?

For a bit of context; quickly skim through the end of 1 Sam. 20, and 21:1-6. David and his men were fleeing from Saul. In their need and hunger, they ate the Bread of Presence, which was meant for priests only. We read that they were not condemned for their actions. Jesus is trying to show that Sabbath was God's good gift for man - to remind people of all that God had done, to enjoy their relationship with him (Exodus 20:8-11) and to point to the ultimate rest in God in heaven (Hebrews 4:9); rather what the Pharisees had made it to be, a burden. More than that, it is also important to note that Jesus' mention of the story of David wasn't merely an appeal to precedent (i.e. "it's okay to do it because David did it), but rather, it's to show Jesus' authority. If David had the right to set aside the requirement of the Law, how much more Jesus, who is a much greater David.

10. What does Jesus' concluding remark say about him?

Jesus, the Son of Man, as the lord of Sabbath, has the authority to restore the law to its rightful place and correctly interpret it. (Point to last week's study about the use of the title 'Son of Man' - Daniel 7:13-14 – and how it shows that Jesus is God's)

11. Were the Pharisees genuinely concerned about adherence to God's law? How do we know?
No. They were merely looking for an opportunity to be accusing Jesus.

12. How did Jesus dispel their accusation against him? How does Jesus define what should and shouldn't be done on the Sabbath?

Jesus responded by saying that Sabbath is for doing good rather than harm, saving a life rather than killing. No where in the Law is healing on the Sabbath prohibited – though again, the Pharisees chose to interpret that as 'work', hence showing that they have missed the point of Sabbath. The Law does command the people to love their neighbor (Lev. 19:18) – which the Pharisees completely did not obey.

13. Using Jesus' definition then, who were the ones breaking the Sabbath?

The Pharisees, in their insistence to cling fast to their man-made burdensome traditions, were the ones who broke the Sabbath/Law. Their response of seeking to plot with the Herodians to destroy Jesus (i.e seeking to 'kill') also showed how they broke the Sabbath.

14. What does the healing of the man with withered hand show about Jesus? (cf. Exodus 4:6-7)

His compassion, as opposed to the Pharisees, in 'saving a life'. This miracle also shows His divinity. We see a parallel in Exodus 4:6-7, where God showed Moses His power through the healing of Moses' leprous hand.

Application

15. From what we have seen today, how is Jesus different from everyone? What does what we've seen today say about the person of Jesus? How are we to respond to it?

16. Do we too, like the Pharisees, try to jump on every opportunity to be accusing someone of sin? Or are we genuinely concerned about the growth and salvation of those around us? How do we avoid the former and cultivate the latter / How do we distinguish the two?

17. Do we try to get other people to adhere to our definition of what's right / wrong, or do we point them to Christ, the Son of Man who is Lord of all?

Prayer

We humbly ask you, O Father, to look upon our weaknesses with mercy, and for the glory of Your name, turn from us all those evils that we rightfully deserve, and grant us that we can place our whole trust and confidence in your mercy, and always serve You in holiness and pureness in living, to your honour and glory, through our only Mediator and Advocate, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (adapted from the Book of Common Prayer)

Study 5: “Jesus is the Lord and He Demands Us to Obey” (Mark 3:7-35)

Getting started

1. Think of a time when you’ve met someone who really disliked Jesus or rejects Him. Why do you think people reject Jesus even though he does good things?
 - Things that the present world has to offer are more appealing than eternal things.
 - Accepting Christ means to give up the earthly ‘good stuff’
 - Think they no need a savior. Consider themselves to be ‘good’ and do not realize that they are sinners who cannot come to God on their own terms.
 - The fear of social rejection/persecution deters some people from receiving Christ as Savior. Concerned with their status among their peers than doing God’s will. These were the Pharisees whose love of position and the esteem of others blinded them, “for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”
 - Perhaps they have a bad experience of how Christianity didn’t work out the way they want it to be or seeing the failures of a ‘true Christian’ Eg. Hypocrites..

Context

Last week we saw Jesus has authority over a new kingdom. In the new kingdom righteousness doesn’t come through fasting and Sabbath-keeping but through Jesus who calls sinners to himself. Jesus brings joy and an end to fasting, and is the Lord of the Sabbath bringing people true rest and salvation. Jesus’ teaching and healings have led to increasing confrontation with the old Israel (religious rulers) who plot together to destroy Jesus. This week we see that Jesus has authority over a new people even though old Israel’s rejection of him continues.

Digging in

Read Mark 3:7-35

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
7-10	Large crowd follow Jesus even from afar
11-12	Even demons acknowledge Christ is Son of God
13-19	Jesus chooses his twelve apostles
20-21	Jesus came to not to please man, but God
22-27	Reject Jesus-no forgiveness
31-35	Jesus describes his true family relationships

Read Mark 3:7-12

3. What made such large crowds follow Jesus? What are some possible motivations/intentions that they want to meet Jesus, even from distant places? (v7-9)
 - It was the report they heard of the great things he did for all that applied themselves to him (v8 “When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him.);
 - Some wished to see one that had done such great things,

- Others hoped he would do great things for them. Eg. Eagerness to be healed by touching Him.
- The Gospel should be the ultimate motivation that encourage us to follow Christ

4. Why did Jesus sternly bid the unclean spirits/demons to remain silent in v.12? (cf. 1:24-26)

- This was not the right time, nor they were not the right witnesses to make Him known.
- Jesus was the Messiah, God's anointed king; but his idea of Messiahship was quite different from the popular idea. He saw in Messiahship a way of service, of sacrifice and of love with a cross at the end of it. The popular idea of the Messiah was of a conquering king who, with his mighty armies, would blast the Romans and lead the Jews to world power. Therefore, if a rumour was to go out that the Messiah had arrived, the inevitable consequence would be rebellions and uprisings, especially in Galilee where the people were ever ready to follow a nationalist leader.
- Jesus thought of Messiahship in terms of love; the people thought of Messiahship in terms of Jewish nationalism. Therefore, before there could be any proclamation of his Messiahship, Jesus had to educate the people into the true idea of what it meant. At this stage nothing but harm and trouble and disaster could come from the proclamation that the Messiah had arrived. It would have issued in nothing but useless war and bloodshed. First of all men had to learn the true conception of what the Messiah was; a premature announcement such as this could have wrecked Jesus' whole mission."

Read Mark 3:13-19

5. Read Exodus 19:1-6. In the light of the Old Testament, what is the significance of what Jesus is doing on the mountain when he calls the twelve?

- Authority in his choice and decision-making, he called unto him whom he would. Christ calls whom he will; for he is a free Agent, and his grace is his own.
- The efficacy of the call; He called them to separate themselves from the crowd, and stand by him, and they came unto him. Christ calls those who were given him (Jn. 17:6); and all that the Father gave him, shall come to him, Jn. 6:37 . Those whom it was his will to call, he made willing to come; his people shall be willing in the day of his power.
- The end and intention of this call; He ordained them, that they should be with him constantly, to be witnesses of his doctrine, manner of life, and patience, that they might fully know it, and be able to give an account of it; and especially that they might attest the truth of his miracles; they must be with him to receive instructions from him, that they might be qualified to give instructions to others.
- The power he gave them to work miracles; and hereby he put a very great honour upon them, beyond that of the great men of the earth. He ordained them to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils. This showed that the power which Christ had to work these miracles was an original power; that he had it not as a Servant, but as a Son in his own house, in that he could confer it upon others.
- Their number and names; He ordained twelve, according to the number of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- Notice the 'on the mountain' -- a place where ppl get closer to God/nearer to his presence. There are also many other significant events happened in that place. Eg. Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, God spoke to Moses...

→ Christianity began with a group. The Christian faith is something which from the beginning had to be discovered and lived out in a fellowship. The whole essence of the way of the Pharisees was that it separated men from their fellows; the very name Pharisee means the separated one; the whole essence of Christianity was that it bound men to their fellows, and presented them with the task of living with each other and for each other.

6. What are they chosen to do? Have they ‘earned the right’ to be chosen as his apostle? (v.13, cf. 2:17)

→ Preach

→ Cast out demons

→ NO, of course...

→ They have no special qualifications at all (judging by worldly standards). Not wealthy; no special social position; no special education--they were not trained theologians; they were not high-ranking churchmen and ecclesiastics; they were twelve ordinary men.

→ But they had faithfully follow Jesus when he called them to do so. There was something about him that made them wish to take him as their Master. Next, they had the courage to show that they were on his side. Eg: Jesus calmly crashing through the rules and regulations; heading for an inevitable collision with the orthodox leaders; Jesus already branded as a sinner and labelled as a heretic; and yet they had the courage to attach themselves to him. They loved Jesus and they were not afraid to tell the world that they loved him--and that is being a Christian.

→ Jesus called them to be with him. He called them to be his steady and consistent companions. Others might come and go; the crowd might be there one day and away the next; others might be fluctuating and spasmodic in their attachment to him, but these twelve were to identify their lives with his life and live with him all the time. Moreover, he called them to send them out. He wanted them to be his representatives.

Read Mark 3:20-35

7. Fill in the boxes below:

	Accusation about Jesus:	How did Jesus respond?
Family	3:20-21 “He is out of his mind” - Jesus had abandoned a secure trade as a carpenter for a wandering life; he had run into trouble with the authorities in what seemed like a deliberate way; he had gathered an odd group of disciples round him. He seemed indifferent to financial and social security and the opinion of others. - traditional societies have placed a high priority on family honour. Jesus is threatening to bring dishonour to his family if he continues to act in such a foolish way. And what of these	3:31-35 Jesus used this event to explain the true meaning of ‘family’ (of faith) -Jesus had already been inviting those who heard him to the totally new life of members of the kingdom of heaven. Then, born into that new life, they would be his brothers and sisters in a new way – a bond even deeper than the normal ties of family. This is the invitation which he still extends to all of us.

	controversies he gets embroiled in with the Jewish religious leaders? Jesus' family will be tainted by his arrogance!	
Scribes	<p>3:30</p> <p>-The scribes declared Jesus' work evil. They should have known better. They were, after all, trained Biblical scholars, responsible for helping people to understand God's law. They were surely aware of the miracles that Jesus has worked (1:21-28, 29-34, 40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6). -While it was apparent to most people that Jesus was doing good works by the power of God, these scribes not only refused to see that—they also subverted the truth by saying that Jesus did his work by demonic power. They rejected the one who could have brought them forgiveness. They not only failed to see the light, but also called the light darkness.</p>	<p>3:23-27</p> <p>-How can Satan cast out Satan? - Jesus' images of a house divided against itself (v. 25) and Satan risen up against himself (v. 26) illustrate the suddenly-obvious fallacy. -How can anyone plunder a strong man's property? To do so, one must first overcome the strong man. How could Jesus cleanse a man of his unclean spirit, as he did in Capernaum (1:21-28)? He could do so only by first overpowering Satan—the ruler of demons. -Jesus overpowered Satan by plundering the strong man's house</p>

8. What is the real reason Jesus can drive out the unclean spirits/demons? Why are the words that the scribes said (blasphemy against the Holy Spirit) dangerous to them (cf v28-29)?

→ Jesus is very Son of God and has the authority to do anything and everything.

→ Even the demons acknowledge that.

→ Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not just a one-time offense; rather, it is an ongoing attitude of rebellion-- a stubborn way of life that continually resists, rejects and insults the Holy Spirit. This is the so called unforgivable sin by Jesus.

→ The attitude of heart matters, not willing to accept God's forgiveness. The ego and arrogant personality.

→ Not blasphemy the Holy Spirit=receive Jesus Christ=allow the Holy Spirit (not the unclean spirit) to work in you, drawing you to Christ, surrender to him

→ By blaspheming that the Holy Spirit is an unclean Spirit shows that one rejects the work of the Holy Spirit wants to do in us, when we have a continued, settled rejection of what He wants to tell us about Jesus, then we blaspheme the Holy Spirit.

→ *It's the heart that matters...

9. What is the hidden meaning behind this sin (vs.29-30) that Jesus is trying to address? (cf. Matthew 12:31-32)

10. What does the 'will of God' mean in v.35? How can we then be part of Jesus's family? (cf. Matthew 7:21; Romans 2:13)

→ John describes the life of faithfulness, which demonstrates true Christianity, similarly as doing the will of God (1 John 2:17)

→ The prayer that Jesus taught them made God's will a central concern in the life of discipleship. They were to petition God that his kingdom might come and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10)

→ Be doers of work, not hearers of word only.

→ Stronger ties even than blood are now being forged. In the perspective of the kingdom 'the family' consists of whoever does God's will. This is not a teaching to be cold to parents. But it is a warning that even so deep, precious, and basic a relationship as that of human family is superseded by the fellowship of the new family of God, which will continue into eternity."

→ "Jesus' re-definition of the family may create problems for many individuals instead of providing answers. The commitment to do the will of God may force some to make a wrenching choice between their biological family and God."

Application

11. From this study, who is Jesus and why he came? Fill in the blanks for the title today.

12. What particular area of your life are you not giving up to Jesus? Are you willing to consider doing so now?

13. Are you Jesus' brother/sister/mother? If so, how can you make sure you are responding correctly to him and does it matter?

Prayer

Lord God, help us to understand that you are Lord and you were here to proclaim your Kingdom. Help us to understand the truth, conquer our unbelief, and let us not reject you in any way which one could conceive. Lord, in your mercy, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Study 6: “The Secret of God’s Kingdom” (Mark 4:1-34)

Getting started

1. What does the word ‘parable’ mean to you? Share your findings among each other.

Context

Jesus was introduced as the long awaited king and God’s own beloved son > he does miracles and wonders, gaining fame > he declares that he came to call the sinners to repentance > he faces strong opposition from religious leaders, and even his own family members. This week, we will be looking at Jesus telling several parables.

Digging in

Read Mark 4:1-34

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title

Read Mark 4:1-20.

3. What were the four different soil types in the first parable and what did Jesus say they meant?
4. What does Jesus say parables are meant to do? (vv.11-12) Which Old Testament reference does he use and how may this add to our understanding?
5. How might this idea of parables be shocking to the readers? How would you explain this to your friend?

6. Compare the settings in which Jesus taught the parable (vv.1-2) and when he explained it (v.10). Why do you think Mark shows this to us?

7. Read verses 21-23 again. What analogy does Jesus use and what point is he trying to make with it?

8. What do you make of verses 24-25?

9. How does this parable add to the readers' understanding of the secret of God's kingdom in the earlier part of the passage?

10. How does this parable add to the readers' understanding of the secret of God's kingdom in the earlier part of the passage?

11. What is the point Jesus is trying to make in this parable?

12. Contrast the mustard seed and the tree it grows up to be.

13. What is the point Jesus is trying to make in this case?

14. What are similar themes in these four parables? How would you tie it together?

Application

15. How could Christians follow Jesus' exhortation to "pay attention to what we hear", especially after his death and resurrection?

16. How have your ideas of God's kingdom been changed / reinforced following this passage? Have you been struggling with living in light of this truth?

Prayer

Lord, we ask that you open our minds to understand the mystery of your Kingdom. Help us to be like the seed which was sowed in the fertile ground, that we may bear fruit that is a hundred fold of what it was initially. Help us to be open for teaching, that we have the grace to lend our ears to hear the truth, even though it may not be immediately clear at first. Lord, in your mercy, accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

Study 7: “The King who has Power over Nature and Demons” (Mark 4:35-5:20)

Getting started

1. How do you look at someone who claims that they can communicate with the spiritual world? Why?

Context

In the previous chapter, Jesus emphasized about listening well so that by listening we may have faith because faith comes from listening (Romans 10:17). Jesus also showed the various examples of what the Kingdom of God is like; it may seem insignificant at first glance but its prominence cannot be denied and it keeps growing. This week we will look at some of the character of the King of the Kingdom and how that relates to faith.

Digging in

Read Mark 4:35:5:20

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title

Read Mark 4:35-41

3. What happened that caused the disciples to be alarmed?

They were on the boat then a furious storm broke out. Firstly we need to be mindful that these were not just mere men but among them were fishermen who had spent all their lives at the lake. For them to be fearful; the squall was possibly of a dangerous scale or unlike anything they had ever experience in their career as a fisherman

4. What was Jesus doing at the time of the storm? What does this tells us about Him?

Jesus was sleeping when the incident happened. The fact that Jesus was sleeping does tell us about his humanity; that he was physically exhausted and like any other human being, he needed rest.

5. How did the disciples react to the possibility of in danger of drowning?

They woke Jesus up and probably in panic tells Him “Don’t you care if we drown?”

6. What did Jesus do to quell the situation? What does this tells about Jesus?

Jesus used words to rebuked the waves. The fact Jesus could use words alone to quell the storm reveals of His nature as God. The same God who could command things to come to existence is the same God

who have full control over nature. That at His word alone; nature is in submission to His will just as how at His words alone did things come to existence in Genesis 1-2.

7. What was Jesus' response to the disciples after calming the storm?

Jesus rebukes them for their lack of faith; they still didn't seem to get it who He is despite after hearing all that He has taught and seeing all that He has done.

Read Mark 5:1-20

8. Who met with Jesus as soon as he got out of the boat? What can we infer about this person?

A man with an impure spirit who – live among tombs (live among the dead; an outward reality that this man was spiritually dead), could not be physically subdued (as it is; no hope of anyone could rescue or even bring him before Jesus), in constant pain (possible spiritual anguish as he cry out and cut himself with stones). Furthermore, he was possessed not by just 1 demon but many many demons (1 legion is equivalent to 6,000 units). In short, looking at the circumstances, he was beyond redemption.

9. How did Jesus demonstrate His authority over the demons?

Not only did he cast them out but He asked for his name (v.9), he gave them leave to possess the pigs (v.12). Here we see that the demons cannot go against His will (i.e. could not refuse to tell Him their name) nor can the demons operate outside of what He allows them to (i.e., possess the pigs)

10. What was the people's response to the event that has just happened in v.13?

They were afraid and pleaded with Jesus to leave the region.

11. What was the man's (who was once demon-possessed) response?

He wanted to follow Jesus but Jesus forbid him.

12. What was the good that came out because Jesus didn't allow him to follow?

The man proclaimed Jesus in the area where Jesus was asked to leave and it may have borne some fruit as the people was amazed (v.20)

13. Based on the 2 passages; what does the 2 passages tells us about Jesus?

First of all, it tells us of His the hypostatic union of Jesus; being both God and Man. Jesus was a man as he also felt exhaustion and needed rest while also tells us about the deity of Jesus.

Jesus had complete authority over creation and the supernatural (demons). The authority no man but only God has.

Both passages also demonstrated the compassion Jesus had for fallen humanity whether it is his own disciples or the demon possessed man. His compassion for them was with the purpose that they will come to faith in Him.

No man can thwart His will just as how we see the gospel was proclaim in an area where He was chased out and furthermore proclaimed by a man who once terrified them. Just as how the Legion of demons could not stop Him from casting them out of the man, neither could the people of Decapolis stop Jesus from proclaiming the gospel.

Application

14. During the 2 miracles, we see the deity of Jesus. Why should it matter? How does it apply to us? What should be our response that fact?

15. How do react/respond when we are besieged with unfavorable circumstances in life? How did this Jesus – the Jesus of miraculous redemption fit into helping us understand and working out our problems?

Prayer

Lord, help us to continue to see that You are indeed divine and exercise authority over nature and demons. Even while the nearer waters flow, and the tempest remains high, help us to remain strong in their face, knowing that You are in control, and You will deliver and guide us into your haven.

Study 8: “Do Not Fear, Only Believe” (Mark 5:21-43)

Getting started

1. Have you been through a near death experience? Or had a disease or sickness that brought you a lot of suffering? What did you do during these desperate times? Share your experience, your thought and your emotions at that time.

Context

From the start of Mark, we have seen the beginning of Jesus ministry on earth. We have seen his authority over men, authority over unclean spirit, authority over nature and authority to heal so far. We have also seen how Jesus teaches God’s words with authority, many came to hear his preaching but not everyone understands. Today we continue to see what Jesus has done to 2 women(daughters) he encountered during his ministry.

Digging in

Read Mark 5:21-43

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
V21-24a	Jairus begs Jesus to save his dying daughter “My little daughter is at the point of death”
V 24b-34	Jesus heals a woman with haemorrhage on the way “Daughter, your faith has made you well”
V35-43	Jesus heals and restores Jairus’s daughter “Girl, I tell you, get up”

Read Mark 5:21-24a

3. Who is Jairus, and how is he different from the rest of the ruler of synagogue?

Jairus is a prominent member of the community, he routinely leads synagogue services (a ruler of synagogue). As compared to the other Pharisees, they were highly offended by Jesus’s teachings and even tried to kill him (3:6).

4. Why did Jairus came to see Jesus for?

As a man of authority, Jairus came to seek for Jesus’s (a teacher with no official position in the synagogue), help in a time of desperation- to save his dying child.

5. Why do you think Jesus went with Jairus?

By seeking Jesus’s help, Jairus expresses his confidence in Jesus’s authority to heal and restore his daughter; “My little daughter is at the point of death. Please come and lay your hands on her, that she may be made healthy, and live. Jesus went because of Jairus’s faith.

Read Mark 5:24b-34

6. What happened when Jesus was on his way to Jairus's house?

A woman with haemorrhage (discharge for 12 years) came up behind Jesus in the crowd, touched his cloth and was healed.

7. What does her condition signify during that era?

She has an issue of blood for 12 years (most likely vaginal discharge), which renders her to be ritually unclean. Not only is she unclean, but her touch renders anyone whom she touches to be unclean as well. (Leviticus 15:25-30). She is not eligible to even visit a synagogue given her condition.

8. What did the woman do in desperation?

She approaches Jesus from behind, in the crowd. She believes that by just touching Jesus's cloth, she will be made well, even though her action might make Jesus unclean. And indeed, her bleeding stopped immediately when she touched Jesus's cloth.

9. How did Jesus react to this incident?

Jesus can sense his power has gone from him and asked his disciples who has touched his clothes. The woman falls down before Jesus in fear and told him the whole truth.

10. What you think cured the woman's disease?

It's definitely not because she touched Jesus's cloth, as Jesus says to her "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace and be cured of your disease." Similar to Jairus plea, she is now saved because of her faith in Jesus. Not only that, she is now welcomed as a daughter in the Kingdom of God.

Read Mark 5:35-43

11. What happened when Jesus was still speaking to the woman?

A tragic news came from Jairus's house informing that his daughter is already dead and ask him not to bother Jesus anymore.

12. How did Jesus respond to the tragic news?

He immediately told Jairus not to fear, but to believe. He only allowed a few disciples to follow him to Jairus's house. When he entered and saw many people weeping for the girl's death, he questions them why they weep when the girl is not dead but only sleeping.

13. How did the crowd react to Jesus's comment?

They mocked Jesus, as they are certain of the girl's death, and they have no confidence in Jesus's ability to save her.

14. What did Jesus do to the girl and what is the significance?

Jesus took her hand and told her to get up. In doing so, Jesus touched the girl's dead body (a corpse) which will make him unclean. But instead of being made unclean, he has saved the girl. And immediately, the girl rose up and walked.

15. After this miracle, Jesus asked those who witnessed not to tell the crowd, why does he do so?

Similar to what happened to the Leper, Jesus ask him not to proclaim what happened openly because Jesus do not want to be distracted from his mission on earth, which is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.

Application

16. What can we learn from Jairus and the woman (with haemorrhage) especially during times of desperation?

In times of desperation, instead of giving up, they put their confidence in Jesus, who has authority in all things. Even though it may seem impossible in the eyes of others.

17. Looking back to our first question, what do you tend to do during times of desperation? And is there anything you would do differently after this study?

Prayer

Please pray for one another over what you have learned from this study, trusting that the Lord will continue to be in control, even at times of our desperation.

Study 9: “Rejection is Real” (Mark 6:1-29)

Getting started

1. Have you ever been blue-ticked on WhatsApp and the person you’re messaging just refuses to listen to what you’re saying and so wouldn’t reply you or tells you to stop? Why do you think they do that?

Context

Last week, we saw after Jesus crossed over the Sea of Galilee again, he was immediately approached by Jairus, who begged Jesus to save his dying daughter. Yet when they were on their way, a woman with a blood flow for twelve years came behind Jesus in a crowd and touched Him. At that instant, her ailment was healed and upon being questioned, she expressed her faith in Jesus’ ability to heal her.

Jairus’ daughter died, but Jesus told Jairus to only believe, as He entered the house, telling the girl to rise, which amazed everyone...

Digging in

Read Mark 6:1-29

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
V1-6	People rejected Jesus because they assumed they already knew who He was.
V7-13	Jesus gave the disciples authority and power to preach repentance.
V14-15	Who the people think Jesus is; prophet like John and miracle worker.
V16-29	Herod fears losing his pride more than fearing a holy and righteous man like John.

Read Mark 6:1-6

3. The people of Nazareth seem to be asking a lot of questions. What do these questions attribute to? Split them into categories according to what the questions attribute to.

Category of questions	Concerning His power and authority	Concerning who they perceived Him to be
Questions from the text	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Where did this man get these things? 2. What is the wisdom given to him? 3. How are such mighty works done by his hands? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? 2. And are not his sisters here with us?

4. Based on these questions, how did the Nazarenes come to the conclusion of taking offence at Jesus? We are not told that the content of Jesus’ teaching was particularly offensive. Their offence had to do with who He was. In the ancient world, there was a strict social class system and most people remained in whichever level of society which was determined by their gender, ethnicity, profession, lineage, education level and even geographical origins. Jesus’ background is anything but impressive. In fact, his birth was controversial and his profession as a carpenter was just typical. “Why should a simpleton from

Nazareth rise above his place and preach and heal?” A key detail that we should not miss out on is in V1: the disciples followed him back to Nazareth. Only rabbis and teachers had followers and that meant that the small-town boy, Jesus was respected by others. These were details about Jesus which the people could not reconcile.

5. What does Jesus’ response (v4) show about His mission and purpose? (cf. 1 Kings 19:10, 2 Chronicles 36:16 and Jeremiah 2:30)

In the Old Testament, prophets were persecuted and most of them were martyred at the hands of the people they preached to. Here in Mark, Jesus is associating Himself with the prophets as his mission is to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14-15, 38) like a prophet and is at the same time rejected by His fellow Nazerenes like a prophet. This foreshadows the Jews’ rejection of Jesus and their demand for his death on a cross.

6. Why couldn’t Jesus do any mighty work in his hometown? Was he intimidated and limited by the people’s rejection?

Certainly not. Jesus marveled at their unbelief which was the heart of the issue. They were so sure they knew who Jesus was and as a result hardened their hearts against Him. Since not many believed in what He said or in the healings He performed, less people came to Him. Hence, the Nazerenes did not get to enjoy the benefits of seeing God’s King introducing the coming Kingdom. Jesus performed miracles as signs meant to point people to Him in faith. Without faith in Him it is meaningless for Him to do these things.

Read Mark 6:7-13

7. Why do you think Jesus charged the disciples to take nothing for their journey except for a staff and sandals?

Having almost no possessions seemed to elevate a sense of urgency for the gospel to be preached. After all, the disciples are carrying an urgent message just as Jesus was in Mark 1:14-15 (the Kingdom of God is at hand). The poverty of the disciples could have been intended to show the coming judgment as in Isaiah’s time (Isa 20:2-4). Also, having no food with them meant that they would have to survive on the generosity of others as well as show their utter dependence on God’s sovereignty in providing for His messengers.

8. Jesus tells the disciples to “shake the dust of their feet as a testimony against” (V11) those who will not receive them or listen to their message. Why is he so harsh?

Jesus is not being harsh but He is being very clear and distinct. Shaking the dust off one’s feet was a gesture that showed separation. Such a response would have been equivalent to the modern-day phrase, “OK, sure. I’m done with you, have it your way.” It was and is so serious because rejection of the message and of the messengers showed rejection of the one who sent them out. Remember, the authority and power that the disciples used was given to them by Jesus Himself, the King. Rejection of a king can also be called treason. It allowed the messengers to move on to preaching the Word to others.

Read Mark 6:14-29

9. What is the significance of some people claiming that Jesus is the resurrected John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-8) or Elijah (2 Kings 2:1, 11)?

John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus. People found Jesus ministry very familiar (He and His disciples were also calling people to repentance) because it was similar to John's ministry. Also, John was one of God's messengers (Mark 1:2), a prophet whose ministry prepared the way for Jesus' ministry. So it was right for the some including Herod to make the connection between John and Jesus though they were obviously two different people. Fun fact: they were cousins. Elijah was also a prophet in the Northern Kingdom of Israel who was very similar to John (2 Kings 1:8). He preached judgment on behalf of God (2 Kings 1:3-4). He was one of few prophets who was not martyred. In fact, He was taken up to Heaven in a chariot of fire. In Mark, people might have thought that Jesus was Elijah who has come back to Israel. Elijah's coming back is the expectation of God bringing about the Day of the Lord (from Malachi 3), so to think that Jesus is Elijah kind of ramps up the expectation .. they think maybe Jesus coming with power is the herald of God coming into the temple to bring His people to salvation ... if only they knew ...

10. What caused John to be arrested?

John behaved like a prophet in calling out those who sin against God. Herod was committing adultery as he married his brother's wife, Herodias. Herodias wanted to kill John for speaking out so boldly. So Herod placed him under arrest but did not kill him because he feared John who was righteous and holy.

11. Who was more sinful in the account of John's arrest and murder?

(This is a trick question that is meant to fuel discussion. They were both just as sinful.)

Herod	Herodias
<p>V17 Did not heed John's rebuke about marrying Herodias.</p> <p>V17 Acted impulsively to jail an innocent John to please his wife (like seriously?)</p> <p>V20 Feared John and recognised his holiness and righteousness but did not listen to him. He gladly heard him as if he were some kind of entertainment.</p> <p>V26 Kills John impulsively because he does not want to damage his ego publicly.</p>	<p>V19 Held a grudge against John and wanted to kill him.</p> <p>V24 Seizes the opportunity to have John killed via her daughter's request to Herod. Some commentators would argue that she used her daughter to seduce Herod but that is unclear.</p>

Rejection of God's message and His messenger(s) can look as subtle as Herod's on-the-fence attitude which is accompanied by no actions of obedience. Similarly, rejection can also take a more salient form of a grudge and hate against one of God's prophets like in Herodias' case. There may be a Herod or a Herodias in each of us and we might even be either of them at different times. We can think back to the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:13-20) if there is time. Herodias reacts to the the Word somewhat like the path (Mark 4:15) while Herod seems a mixture of rocky ground and thorns (Mark 4:16-19). The main point is that both are still bad soil.

Application

12. When we hear God's word to us: His commands, His rebuke in the Bible. How should we respond to Him? Is our response correct?

13. What kind of expectations should we have as Christians when we preach the gospel to others?

Take time here to survey the group:

-Are you actively preaching the gospel to your friends?

-What fears do you have or what factors hinder you from preaching the gospel? Suggest bringing people to UCF/ Christianity Explored and learn Two Ways To Live. [Text Wrapping Break]-Are simply afraid of rejection?

-We have seen that Jesus emphasises a great urgency for the gospel to be preached because it is a matter of life and death. Why do we take it so lightly?

*Let's be gentle but firm here. The goal is to get people to realise the need to be missional.

Prayer

Lord, help us to continue trust in you, that as we continue to share your word to the world, we may have the grace to accept rejection from people who may not be interested in listening.

Study 10: “The True Shepherd” (Mark 6:30-56)

Getting started

1. Who would you trust your life with? Why?

Context

Last week, we saw how the people doubted and rejected Jesus, the apostles, and John (Beheaded). We’re shown that there is a ‘limit’ to God’s patience. Where He will just “shake the dust off feet on His feet”, and leave. Therefore, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...”

Throughout Mark, we’re made to consider who Jesus is. We’ve seen what He is capable of, “...wisdom given to Him... mighty works done by his hands...” (Mk 6:2). Up till now, we see Him preaching as one with authority, has the power to heal, has authority over nature, has command over demons, and even brings the dead to life.

Digging in

Read Mark 6:30 - 6:56

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
30 - 34	Jesus shows compassion to His apostles and followers
35 - 44	Jesus feeds the five thousand
45 - 52	Jesus walking on water, and the disciples hardened hearts
53 - 56	Jesus healing the sick in Gennesaret

3. From Mark’s perspective so far, what impression do you have of Israel’s Leaders? (t)

- a. Herod Antipas

Commits adultery. Beheads John the Baptist just because of he was afraid to lose his pride. Later on, mocks Jesus in his trial. (Lk 23:8)

- b. Pharisees and Scribes

Only cares about seats in the high places. Prays in open places that others may see. Cares about traditions that benefit themselves, even if it means going against God’s commandment. (Mk 7:8-13)

Read Mark 6:30-44

4. What did Jesus give to the crowd?

- a. Taught them many things (v 34)

- b. Fed them

The language of sheep and shepherds traces back deep into the Old Testament. To truly appreciate the significance of this miracle, we need to dig into some key passages in the Old Testament.

Read Exodus 3:10, 16:9-18, 34-35

5. How is Jesus like Moses?

He is there to guide, provide, intercede on behalf of men, and lead Israel.

Read Ezekiel 34:1-24

The Shepherds of Israel in Ezekiel

What they should have done	What were they doing instead
a. Feed the sheep (v2), b. Strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bound up the injured, brought back the strayed, sought out the lost (v4)	a. Ruled them with force and harshness (v4), b. Eat the fat, clothe themselves with the wool, slaughter the fat ones (v3)

As a result, the sheep were scattered, and became food for the wild beasts (v5)

6. What did God promise to do for his flock?

- a. Seek out the sheep, and rescue them from all places where they have been scattered (v12)
- b. Bring them out from the peoples, countries and bring them into their own land. (v13)
- c. Feed them ... in all the inhabited places of the country. (v13)
- d. Seek the lost, bring back the strayed, bind up the injured, strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will destroy. (v16)

7. Whom would he send?

- a. I will set up over them one shepherd, **my servant David**, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. (v23)

'David is dead when Ezekiel was written'

- b. Jesus - the servant David

Read Numbers 27:15-18

8. Given that "Joshua" is simply the Hebrew form of "Jesus", what do you think is being said about Jesus in Mark 6?

Jesus is the shepherd of the sheep written in Num 27:17. He is there to guide the people. To "lead them out and bring them in."

9. Based on your reading of Mark and the OT links above, how is Jesus the promised true shepherd of Israel?

He has done everything that the true shepherd of Israel should and will do. (Refer above to Question 5)

Read Mark 6:45-56

10. What do you think the disciples were thinking about when they saw Jesus walking on water?

They were afraid and astounded as to who Jesus is. Because they still do not have faith in Christ even after seeing what He is capable of doing.

11. What did Jesus mean to do in v48? What do you think that means?

He meant to pass by them. *If we link it back to Exodus 32:34 - 34:9, we see Israel sinning (Golden Calf) and God semi-abandoning them by promising to send an angel to guide them instead Himself. And Moses pleaded that God Himself should guide Israel, that others may know that Israel is distinct (33:15,16). Thus when God came down and passed by Moses, it was in reply to Moses asking to see God's Glory.

We could thus link that passing by (as an action/verb) is so that God could guide/lead his people. Or it could be so that He could show His Glory.

Looking back to the OT...

12. Who is the one that passes by in Exodus 34:4-8?

God, the LORD.

13. After reading all the verses above, compare Jesus, Moses, and Herod & the Pharisees.

The LORD, YAHWEH

14. Instead of being fearful, how should the disciples have responded? Why?

The disciples have been there since the beginning of Jesus's ministry. They have heard his teaching - which has authority, unlike the other scribes, leaders -, and seen his works and miracles. At this point in Mark, they should have at least had faith in his ability and his similarity with prophets of old.

Application

15. Have there been times where you felt God is incapable/impassionate of solving your problem?

16. As Christians - knowing that Christ who cares, has died on the cross and dealt with our greatest problem - what should we do when we face trials?

Prayer

Please read through Psalm 23, and then pray as we remember how God has sent Jesus to become our shepherd.

Study 11: “True Defilement & What to do With It” (Mark 7:1-23)

Getting started

1. Have you ever misjudged someone by his/her outward performance? What made you realize that you had misjudged?

Context

In the previous study, we saw how Jesus fed the five thousand as time was getting late. After that, Jesus sent His disciples away as He remained alone. While out at sea, the disciples encountered a storm and at the fourth watch, Jesus appeared to them while walking on water, followed by the calming of the storm.

As they sat foot at Gennaseret, many people came to Jesus wanting to get healed, and this is where we will begin today’s study, when the Pharisees and the scribes entered the scene...

Digging in

Read Mark 7:1-23

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
1-13	Jesus vs Pharisees and scribes about issues of defilement, traditions and commandments.
14-16	Jesus teaches the crowd about true defilement.
17-23	Jesus explains the teaching to the disciples.

Read Mark 7:1-5

3. What did the Pharisees mean, when they said that the hands of the disciple are defiled?
Pharisees did not mean that their hands are dirty physically, but they were judging that the disciples for not doing the ceremonial washing (ref. footnotes), which is part of the traditions of the elders.

4. Who are the ones who came up with all these traditions? What are they based on?
v3: The elders (not God), those are based on their own believes, but not from God (v7)

Read Mark 7:6-13

5. Why are these traditions so important to the Pharisees? (cf. Lk 11:37-44)
v6: They are hypocrites, that they wanted to use these outward performances to make themselves look more godly and religious, hence look more ‘undefiled’ than others.

6. How did the Pharisees leave the commandments of God? What is the example stated by Jesus? (cf. Luke 11:42)

v9: They rejected commandment of God to establish their traditions in many things (v13).

E.g. Moses' law: Honour your father and mother;

Pharisees' tradition: Whatever parents would have gained is given to God. As long as their children do Corban, it's ok that the older generations get nothing from their children. But this has gone against God's commandments as they should not neglect justice and the love of God and the others.

7. What are the possible reasons of why the Pharisees and scribes in doing the above? (cf. Matthew 23:13-15, 23-24)

They do not keen to provide the older generations financially, so they rather turn what should have been given to the parents to be offering to God, as a religious outward performances. And not only has they done it themselves, they teach others to do the same as what they do.

The Pharisees and scribes emphasize the ceremonial law over the moral law. The moral law shows us that our hearts are unclean. The Pharisees try to compensate for this moral inadequacy by keeping the external ceremonial laws.

Read Mark 7:14-23

8. How did Jesus define defilement?

<p>What does not defile a person: Things outside that going into him (i.e. Food)</p>	<p>What defiles a person: Things that come out of a person (i.e. Evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness)</p>
<p>Explanation: Food enters stomach and be expelled as poop. It is not going to enter his heart.</p>	<p>Explanation: These evil things come from the heart of man, so it defiles him. What matters is the heart: a sinful heart causes evil things and hence keeps him away from the holiness of God.</p>

9. In Leviticus Chapter 11, it is written that 'you shall not eat... because ... is unclean to you.' (eg. v4) Why and how did Jesus declare all foods clean when some foods are declared unclean in Leviticus 11? (cf. Lev 16)

The ceremonial laws were implemented, not because these animals were actually unclean. The animals were 'unclean to the Israelites' not to God. The point was that God wanted them to be consecrated to him, to be holy just as he is holy (Lev 11:44-45). Separate from the Gentiles.

v19b: Jesus is the lord of food law, as he has the authority to declare all foods clean. This is because Jesus shall be the true atonement in Leviticus 16, that he shall make atonement for the Holy Place,

because of the uncleannesses of the people of the people of Israel and because of their transgressions, all their sins. (Lev 16:16) Therefore, people shall be holy and just by believing in his death and resurrection, rather than by obeying the ceremonial laws.

10. How does Jesus' teaching on defilement tie in to the issue regarding traditions? (cf. Deut 10:12-22) The Pharisees have their own definition of defilement and their own way to deal with it, and here came the traditions of men. Rather than putting God's commandment as the first authority, they replace it with those traditions, which actually did not help Israelites to live a life of love God, love neighbour.

On the other hand, Jesus teaches that God's commandments shall always be kept. And he teaches that the defilement of a man is closely related to the heart, that everyone is defiled due to the sinfulness of the heart not because of the uncleanness of food.

When Jesus died on the cross, he removed the barrier between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2:14-16). It is his blood that cleanses us and makes us clean before God, not keeping the ceremonial laws. His blood makes us God's children and the Spirit transforms our hearts to want to live in obedience to the moral law.

Behind obedience to the moral law is the condition of the heart. It's so much easier to obey external religious rituals than it is to obey from the heart (internal). We must turn to Jesus to change us from the inside not only at salvation but also in sanctification.

Application

11. Why is it easier to do what the Pharisees did (focus on the externals) than to do what Jesus wants us to do (focus on the heart)?

It requires the work of God. We can't do it on our own.

12. In what ways might we be like the Pharisees and scribes, putting our focus solely on our 'externals'?

13. How might we change our focus to the heart and not go back to the easy path?

Focus on Jesus and abide in him.

14. Who might you be able to share this message with this week?

Prayer

Lord, please help us to understand that faith in the gospel is sufficient for us to be saved, and there is no need for us to rely upon man-made traditions which may take us away from the message of the gospel. Help us to also realize that it is from what is happening within us that cause us to defile our walk with you, less so from external circumstances. Amen.

Study 12: “Saviour of Jews and Gentiles” (Mark 7:24-8:13)

Getting started

1. Who are some of the people that our society thinks are undeserving of compassion, care and salvation?

Context

Last week, we learned that the Pharisees focused on keeping the ceremonial law in order to be clean. It is much easier to obey external religious laws than to obey internally from our hearts. But Jesus says that defilement comes from within a person’s heart, and only Jesus can change and sanctify our hearts.

In the book of Mark, we’re made to consider who Jesus is. We’ve seen what He is capable of, and He is constantly challenging His disciples to see that He is the promised Messiah. As we ponder the identity of Jesus, we are driven to recognise who Jesus is for ourselves and ask if we have responded rightly to Him in faith.

Digging in

Read Mark 7:24 – 8:13

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
7:24-30	Jesus and the Syrophenician woman
7:31-37	Jesus heals a deaf and mute man
8:1-10	Feeding of the 4,000
8:11-13	The Pharisees demand a sign

Read Mark 7:24-30 – In this passage, Mark shows the fact that Jesus is approaching a Gentile woman.

3. What do the following passages tell us about the relationship between the Jews and Gentiles?
 - a. Genesis 12:3
Through [Abraham](#), [all the families of the earth](#) shall be blessed.
 - b. 1 Kings 10:1-10, 24-25
The Queen of Sheba (a Gentile) praised the Lord for [Israel’s](#) prosperity and Solomon’s wisdom and gifted Solomon great amounts of spices and precious stones. [The whole earth](#) brought [Solomon](#) great gifts to hear his God-given wisdom
 - c. Isaiah 2:1-3
[All nations](#) will go to the house of the Lord to be taught and to walk in His paths, where the law and God’s words will flow from [Zion](#).

d. Zechariah 8:20-23

Many peoples and every nation will seek allegiance and favour from the Lord through Jews.

4. How do these passages explain the priority of Jesus ministry at this point to the Jews before the Gentiles?

In God's promise to Abraham, the Jews were chosen to be the medium through which all nations come to know God. As such, Jesus ministered to the Jews first before the Gentiles.

5. The Syrophenician woman is a Greek, a foreigner to Israel. Jesus points out that she is one of the 'dogs', one of the unclean, with whom Jews were not to associate.

a. How does this Gentile woman respond to Jesus?

She starts off agreeing with Jesus, showing that she did not envy the blessings of the Jews or desire anything that might take away from them. She only desired that this favour might be granted to her, which she knows she was not chosen to receive as an unclean Gentile.

b. What is remarkable about her response?

She recognises that Jesus prioritises ministry to the Jews. But even as an unclean Gentile, she humbly asked in faith that she might be allowed a small benefit or favour, when it did not take from, and was no disadvantage to the Jews.

Read Mark 7:31-37 – Tyre, Sidon and the Decapolis were in Gentile territory. The man from Mark 5:20 seems to have done his work well!

6. Why did Jesus sigh in verse 34? Is it because Jesus is so distressed by this fallen world?

Jesus sighed not because he did not know how to heal or despaired the work, but in compassion for the man's condition. Coupled with the action of looking up to heaven, we see that Jesus is intentionally pointing out that healing and favour comes from God in divine mercy and compassion.

7. Read Isaiah 35:1-10. What is the significance of Jesus healing a deaf/mute man in Gentile territory?

God promises that he will come to save, and then the deaf and mute be healed. The redeemed will walk the Way of Holiness. The fact that the man was healed in a Gentile territory (and he might be Gentile) shows that salvation can come to the Gentiles as well.

8. Given the state of people's hearts of the people of Israel (its leaders, crowds and the disciples), what hope is shown in these verses?

Despite the hardened hearts of the Israelites, Jesus's ministry does not stop at them. He continues to have compassion upon Gentiles, minister and offer the gift of salvation to them.

Read Mark 8:1-10

9. Mark draws our attention to the fact that again, a great crowd gathered that needed to be fed.

a. Compare Mark 6:30-44 with Mark 8:1-10. What are the similarities and differences?

	Mark 6:30-44	Mark 8:1-10
Similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Feeding a large crowd in desolation ● Jesus has compassion for the crowd ● Jesus commanded his disciples to find the crowd something to eat ● The disciples questioned how they can feed ● Jesus gave thanks and broke the bread ● All ate and were satisfied 	
Differences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jewish territory (possibly near Bethsaida) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gentile territory (Decapolis)

b. What do you think of the disciples' response this time? What does this show about them?
 The disciples had a similar response in asking how they might feed the crowd. This shows that they still question the power of Jesus and did not see the divinity of Jesus as their hearts were hardened (cf. Mark 6:52)

c. Why do you think Mark presents an almost identical feeding account here?
 To show that despite the disciples seeing the exact same feeding account prior to this, they still responded in the same way. Despite witnessing the power of Jesus in the first feeding and healing amongst the Gentiles, they still did not trust in the power of Jesus to perform the miracle again or understand that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

Read Mark 8:11-13

10. Why does Jesus groan when he is asked for a sign by the Pharisees?

This deep sigh was due to the hardness of the Pharisees' hearts, the malignity of their minds and insincerity of their intentions. The Pharisees did not want to know the truth, but asked to ensnare Jesus. Even after many signs and miracles were shown to them, they still would not believe.

Application

11. In one sentence, summarise what this passage teaches us about who Jesus is and what he came to do.

Jesus is God who has come to his people, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles as the good shepherd who compassionately leads and truly cares for his people.

12. Jesus's mission was first to the lost sheep of Israel (Mark 7:27) but how does this passage (7:24-8:10) show us Jesus's concern for the Gentile world? As Gentiles ourselves, how should we be humbled and encouraged by this?

We are now also able to partake in the redemption and salvation of Christ. How amazing is this! We who were unclean are adopted as sons, daughters and counted co-heirs with Christ, equal with the chosen Jews. Thank God for His gift of salvation for all.

13. Do we trust that Jesus says who He is and has the power and desire to save all types of people (including the Gentiles in our society who are considered unclean and undeserving of compassion and care)?
14. In light of knowing Jesus's compassion and heart to care for all types of people, what implications does this passage have for evangelism and our care for others?
[How are we as followers of Christ, emulating His compassion and care for his people, including those we consider unclean?](#)

Prayer

Please pray for one another over what you have learned from this study, among other things.

Study 13: “Do You Not Yet Understand?” (Mark 8:11-21)

Getting started

1. What miracle did Jesus perform? How does it help us understand Jesus’ identity better? (cf. Mark 8:1-10)

Digging in

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title

Read Mark 8:11-13

3. Why did the Pharisees seek a sign from Jesus?

4. How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees?

5. Why do you think Jesus responded in this way? (v12)

Read Mark 8:14-21

6. What did Jesus mean by ‘the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod’ in Mark 8:15? (see Matthew 16:12, Luke 12:1, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8)

7. What is Jesus trying to highlight in Mark 8:18 by asking, “Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?”

8. Why did Jesus ask the disciples twice, “Do you not yet understand?” (Mark 8:17, 21)

Application

9. Who do you identify with, the pharisees or the disciples?

10. Seeing Jesus’ miracles, do you think the Pharisees and the disciples responded to Jesus correctly? If yes, why? If not, how should they respond?

11. Seeing how the disciples responded to Jesus, how should we respond to him personally?

12. As a church, how should this passage encourage us to look for the Son of God rather than miracle?

Prayer

Lord, please help us to continue understand that it is not the purpose of Jesus to create miracles in order to impress the people; instead He is here to proclaim the gospel and the coming of your Kingdom. Amen.

Study 14: “Who Do People Say I Am?” (Mark 8:22-9:1)

Getting started

1. If you asked people at work/university “Who is Jesus?”, what kinds of responses would you expect?

Digging in

Mark 8:22-9:1

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title

3. How are the disciples blind in v17-21? How are eyes being opened in v27-29? How is there still some blindness in v31-33?
4. So how is the two-stage healing in v22-25 a picture of what will happen to Peter and the other disciples?
5. Why do you think the disciples were able to confess that Jesus was the Christ?
 - a. What evidence did they have, at this point in the Gospel story?
 - b. Why did Jesus charge and command them ‘to no one about him’ (v30)?

6. What is Jesus' big mission? (v31)

7. Why does he say he "must" accomplish it?

8. Why did Jesus wait until this point to reveal to the disciples the necessity for his suffering and death?

9. How does Jesus' incredibly strong reaction to Peter's words (v33) underline the vital importance of this mission and the awfulness of Cross-less Christianity?

10. In this context, what does Jesus mean by 'take up his cross' (v34)?
 - a. What does it mean to be a follower of Jesus?

 - b. What does Jesus call for?

11. How does v34-38 compare with our expectations of the Christian life?

Application

12. How can we focus our personal and public worship more on the cross of Christ?

13. What will it look like to lose our life for the gospel this week?

Prayer

- **Praise** Jesus that he was willing to suffer and die for us.
- **Pray** that we would not be ashamed of Jesus, his words or his Cross but gladly lose our life and find out identity in the suffering Christ.

Study 15: “The Pre-eminence and Supremacy of Christ Demands a Response of Faith” (Mark 9:2-29)

Getting started

1. When you were in school, why did you obey your teacher? What made you obey your teacher even though he/she is not your parent?

Context

In last week’s study, the disciples were warned by Jesus not to be like the Pharisees and Herod, who hardened their hearts by unbelief. We are reminded to set our minds on the things of God and not the things of man. We also learned that what does following Jesus means and entails. Lastly, Jesus’ death and resurrection is part of God’s plan and is tied in to His mission and identity.

Digging in

Read Mark 9:2-29

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
9: 2 - 8	Jesus revealed himself to be greater than the laws and prophets
9: 9 - 13	Jesus’ mission at the Cross
9: 14 - 18	Jesus’ disciples who were not able to exorcise the boy
9: 19 - 29	Jesus exorcised the mute spirit and the growing belief of the boy’s father

3. What did Peter, James and John witness at the high mountain? (v2-4)
 - They saw Jesus transfigured (transformed) before them – his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them.
 - They also saw Elijah and Moses talking to Jesus
4. What does the transformation of Jesus’ clothing tell us about Jesus?
 - Before the transformation, Jesus was a fully man
 - After the transformation, Jesus revealed his identity (fully God) and His heavenly glory to the ‘inner circle’ of his disciples (i.e. prominent church leaders)
5. What does the appearance of Elijah and Moses mean?

The appearance of Elijah and Moses represented the Prophets and the Laws respectively.
6. What was the disciples’ response when they saw what was happening? (v 5-6)
 - Peter was terrified and said he would set up three tents (i.e. tabernacle) for all three (i.e. Moses, Elijah and Jesus), having the impression that they are of the same importance.
 - Read Exodus 25:8
7. How did God respond? (v 7) What was the significance of the response?

- God said “This is my beloved son; listen to him”.
- God’s voice from heaven clearly showed that Jesus, the promised Messiah, is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets and is more supreme and greater than both.
- Read Exodus 24: 15-17

Read Exodus 24:15-17

8. In v 12, Jesus said that Elijah will come first to restore all things. However, in v 13, Jesus said that Elijah has come. What do you think he meant by that?
 - In Malachi 4: 5, God promised that Elijah will come first before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes (i.e. the second coming of Jesus). This is consistent with v 12.
 - In v 13, Jesus affirms that Elijah has come to restore all things but has suffered and was badly treated. We assume that Elijah here was referring to John the Baptist (Luke 1:17).
 - Jesus will suffer the same fate as Elijah/John
9. What happened to the boy? What does this tell us about the boy’s condition? (v 17, 20-22)
 - The boy was possessed by a mute and deaf demon since childhood. The demon would often cast the boy into fire and into water, attempting to destroy him.
 - He was severely suffering and this was a particularly powerful demon that possessed the boy.
10. Why do you think the disciples were not able to cast out the unclean spirit from the boy? (v 18)
The disciples exemplify a ‘faithless generation’ (v 19) and they have not been depending on Jesus (in prayer).
11. Read again v 23. What was the father’s request to Jesus and how did Jesus respond to the request? Why didn’t Jesus immediately heal? (v 23-24)
He immediately asked Jesus to help his unbelief. The growing belief of the boy’s father in Jesus healed the boy.
12. What does the boy’s father’s response tell us about faith? (v 23-24)
The father showed a simple dependence on Jesus. Jesus is drawing faith/belief from the boy’s father and he demands a similar response from us.

Application

13. How well do you really know who Jesus is? If you know, do you have faith in Him?
14. God commands everyone to listen to Jesus. How are you listening to that command? What are you doing in response to that commandment?
15. How will you trust Jesus in the area of your studies and/or relationships?

Other readings on the Transfiguration

The account of transfiguration of Jesus Christ is also recorded in Matthew 17:1-13 and Luke 9:28-36.

Prayer

Please pray for one another over what you have learned from the Transfiguration, among other things.

Study 16: “Entering the Kingdom” (Mark 9:30-10:31)

Getting started

1. What does the title above mean to you? Discuss with your partner.

Context

In our previous study, we looked through the account of the Transfiguration, where Jesus revealed His true form in front of Peter, James, and John. On top of that, they also saw Moses and Elijah. This was followed by an encounter with a boy who was possessed by a mute spirit. Upon being told by Jesus to believe, the father of the boy expressed faith and asked to conquer his own unbelief...

Digging in

Read Mark 9:30-10:31

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
9:30-32	The second passion prediction
9:33-37	The greatest is the servant of all
9:38-41	We should not stop people who are following and serving Jesus, but are not related to us.
9:42-50	It is better to die than to cause a “little one” to stumble.
10:1-12	Marriage should be lifelong. Divorce is a result of sin
10:13-16	To enter the kingdom we must be like children
10:17-31	Those who depend on themselves cannot enter

3. How does the theme of “children” run through this passage (9:20, 9:36-37, 9:42, 10:13-16, 10:24)?
What are children meant to symbolize throughout these verses?

Children “little ones” are meant to be a picture of discipleship. Depending on Jesus in humble trust.

Read Mark 9:30-37

4. What is the significance of Jesus being “delivered into the hands of men”? (Isaiah 53:4-6, 10)
Jesus has come to lay down his life as the Suffering Servant.

5. How does the disciples’ response in 9:33-34 demonstrate their total understanding of his mission (9:32)?

Jesus is talking about sacrificial service, and they are talking about greatness. Jesus has already told them, that if they would follow him they must deny themselves, and take up their cross and follow him (8:34). These values are totally inconsistent with following Jesus

6. What does true greatness look like? How is that illustrated by the child?

Jesus said "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.". Greatness in God's economy is not those who are gifted and privilege, but rather it lies in the simple task of serving others.

Jesus also used the example of receiving a child in His name. Children were deemed as "last" in society. Whoever receives them receives Jesus, and the Father as well.

Read Mark 9:38-50

7. How does the disciple's response in verse 38-41 show they have still not grasped what Jesus meant in verse 37?

Jesus receives other people and they are baring them, because they are not on the inner circle. They are still concerned with their own position. What they've failed to grasp is that "relation to Christ" is more important than "relation to us". They are proud.

8. How does Jesus teaching in verse 42-50 highlight the seriousness of causing another disciple to stumble? (cf. Is. 66:24)

Note that the language of stumbling is usually related to falling away in Scripture. (e.g. 1 Pet. 2:8)

Jesus answer is, it would basically be better to be dead.

a) Does Jesus literally mean that we should chop off our limbs? What does he mean?

No. But he is saying that we must take radical action to stop sinning, especially sin that causes others to stumble.

9. What does it mean to:

a) Be salted with fire?

OT- temple sacrifice involved both salt and fire. Smoke rising from the consuming fire was pleasing incense to Yahweh (Lev 1). Salt was a sign of the covenant (Num 18:19) and required for all sacrifices (Lev 2:13).

Today, fire and salt are symbols of trials and cost of discipleship. Laying down one's life, totally consumed (sacrifice). But not to failure and frustration, rather trials sanctify the believer. Salt as preservative, similarly Christians are preservatives in society. How do we do that?

b) Be salty?

Having salt, basically means living by Jesus's words.

At this point we turn to consider who can enter the Kingdom. Here we're given another Marcan sandwich – two groups who fail to enter, surrounded by one group who can.

Read Mark 10:1-12

10. What is God's intention for marriage? (v6-9)

Lifelong union. No divorce

11. How then are we to understand divorce? (10-12)

Always a result of sin. Remarriage results in adultery.

The question that the religious leaders pose, demonstrates the sinfulness in their hearts. Despite being religious leaders, they are far from the Kingdom.

Read Mark 10:13-16

12. Why was Jesus so indignant (very angry)?

They are stopping children from being brought to Jesus.

13. What does it mean to receive the Kingdom of God like a child?

The child does not represent innocence, but total dependence. i.e. faith.

Read Mark 10:17-31

14. Why is it so surprising that the rich man doesn't enter in (cf. v26)?

He knelt before Jesus. He comes to Jesus. He seeks eternal life. He's rich (sign of blessing in the OT), he's moral. To an OT believer, he was a model example of one who would enter.

15. How does verse 13-16 help us understand what the rich man is lacking?

He's trusting in himself and his own riches. He lacks childlike trust, and that is indicated by the fact that he won't give up his riches. Jesus doesn't call all Christians to give away all their possessions, but he does call on all Christians to depend on him with childlike trust, which will include generosity with our possessions, and willingness to give them away if that is necessary.

16. Why then are riches so dangerous? (22-25)

They cause us to rely and trust on ourselves for security rather than Jesus.

17. The disciples were amazed (v22), and exceedingly astonished (v26), asking "Then who can be saved?". How does Jesus comfort his disciples?

If this model Jew couldn't get in, then what hope do they have? Jesus echoes the promises made earlier in 8:34-9:1, that all who trust in him, will receive life in the end. Any sacrifice made will be worth it now and in eternity. Note: this is not saying that if we give to God, he will give back to us (Prosperity teaching). It is precisely a desire for riches that stops this man from entering the Kingdom. The promise is fulfilled in being a part of the church, rather than having hundreds of our own houses. (in what sense could we have hundreds of literal brothers sisters and mothers? This is also shown by the fact that "fathers" are missing from the list, because we only have one father, i.e. God.

Application

18. How does this passage challenge you to live your life as someone in the Kingdom?
19. What things prevent you from following Jesus as you ought?
20. Why are Jesus' words to the rich man (10:21) so challenging to us?
21. How would taking a child-position change our view of our salvation and of our ministry?

Prayer

Pray for one another over what you have learned from the passage.

Study 17: “Jesus, the Greatest Servant” (Mark 10:32-52)

Getting started

1. Among the people who are around you, who do you consider as a great person? What makes you think that he/she is great?

Context

Last week we looked at :

- Jesus teaches disciples to humble themselves and be willing to accept all kinds of people into God’s kingdom, even those who have low status in the society like children.
- Jesus teaches that we need to take action to deal with our sin in order to enter God’s kingdom.
- Jesus also teaches that only people who have a child-like faith which is of full dependence to God are able to receive God’s kingdom.
- Finally, Jesus assures that those who are willing to give up everything for Jesus’ sake and for the gospel will surely get their reward in eternal life.

Digging in

Read Mark 10:32-52.

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
32 - 34	Jesus be humiliated and killed and resurrected
35 - 40	Jesus took the wrath and judgment on behalf of his people
41 - 45	Jesus the example of greatest servant
46 - 52	Jesus is merciful and healed a blind beggar who has faith

Read Mark 10:32-34

3. What are the state of disciples and other followers when they are going to Jerusalem? What might be the reason for that?

Disciples were amazed, other followers were afraid (there were probably a great number of people following as suggested in v46)

This might because they were thinking that Jesus was going to start a political revolution (maybe a war) against the Romans Empire from Jerusalem, to fulfill the prophecy in Isaiah 35. Everything from v3-6 has been fulfilled. They might have thought that God will come to save them (v4), and ransom His people(v8-10) from the oppression of the Roman Empire.

4. Who is the Son of Man referring to? What is going to happen to him?

Referring to Jesus (v32b). Once they go up to Jerusalem, (i) he will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, (ii) Chief priests and scribes will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the

Gentiles, (iii) The Gentiles will mock and spit on him, and flog him and kill him, (iv) after 3 days he will rise.

Read Mark 10:35-45

5. What was in James' and John's mind when they ask Jesus to grant them to sit at his sides?

They were probably thinking that Jesus was going to sit on the throne of Davidic kingship and they hope that they will also get high power and glory after Jesus becoming the Jewish king. They totally have no idea about how Jesus was going to be a king by being a servant who dies for his people.

6. How did Jesus respond to them?

He said that they did not know what they are asking. And he asks them if they can drink the cup that Jesus drink and baptize with the baptism with which Jesus is baptized.

7. What is the cup that Jesus drink and what is the baptism with which Jesus is baptized?

The cup that Jesus drink: God's wrath against sin (c.f. Jeremiah 25:15) and this cup needs to be taken from Israel (c.f. Isaiah 51:17-23)

Baptism with which Jesus is baptized: Being overwhelmed with water is an OT image for God's wrath and judgment (c.f. Gen 6:17; Ex 14:21-28) through which his people are saved (c.f. Gen 7:1; Ex 14:29; 1 Peter 3:20-21)

Baptism has a dual purpose, in which (1) a party bears the punishment, (2) the other party obtains salvation

E.g. : (1) Egyptians (2) Israelites (1) The world (2) Noah

However, when Jesus said that James and John will drink the cup that he drinks, and they will be baptized with the baptism with which Jesus is baptized, it means that he will die on their behalf so that they will drink and be baptized 'in him and with him'

Read Mark 10:46-52

8. What does it imply when Jesus says that the seat is not his to grant but it is for those for whom it has been prepared?

It doesn't diminish the power of Jesus, but it shows the obedience of Jesus to the Father's will, that the Father is the one who prepares the seats. It shows the character and role of the persons in the Trinity as well.

9. What was the other disciples' mood when they heard James' and John's request? How did Jesus respond to that?

v41: They were indignant(very angry) at James and John

v42: Jesus again reminded them that whoever would be great must be servant and slave of all, and the reason that he gave is that even himself came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many.

10. What did Bartimaeus cry out when he heard that Jesus was there? How did Jesus respond to that?
v47: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. Showing that Bartimaeus manage to recognize that Jesus' Davidic kingship. And he has faith in Jesus' mercifulness as he cried out more when people tried to stop him.

v49: Jesus stopped, called Bartimaeus and asked him the exact same question that he asked John and James in v36, and he healed Bartimaeus as he requested.

11. What does it show about Jesus?

This shows us Jesus' mercy, love and willingness to serve for people such as a blind beggar who is considered worthless, that even people around stop him from crying to Jesus (v48) because they think he doesn't deserve Jesus to stop for him.

12. In what way is Bartimaeus' response to Jesus a good example of what it means to be a disciple?
Recognizing Jesus for who he is (v47) having faith in him and responding rightly to his lordship by following him (v52)

Application

13. Reflect on your life, are you more like the disciples who put much concern for their own glory, power, and comfortable life, or, are you more like Bartimaeus who desperately cried out for Jesus' mercy and had faith in him? Why?

14. How does this passage help us to define greatness/successfulness of a person?

15. How can we respond to the Christ, who came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many?

16. Is there anyone whom you think they don't deserve your good treatment? How can you start serving them?

Prayer

- *Pray that each of us will respond to God's mercy by having faith in Jesus and not seeking for our own glory.*
- *Pray that we will serve the people around us, with Jesus as the example.*

Study 18: “Have Genuine Faith in Jesus, the Saviour King” (Mark 11:1-26)

Getting started

1. What do we admire about other religions?

Context

Peter has declared Jesus to be the Christ.
Jesus has foretold his death for three times ...

“See we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.” (Mark 10:33-34)

He has made obvious his ultimate mission. And here He is, entering Jerusalem ...

Digging in

Read Mark 11:1-26

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title

Read through the following:

- Mark 11:1-11
- Zechariah 9:9-11 – King, righteous and having salvation, is coming on a colt
- 2 Kings 9:13 – They laid down their cloaks and proclaimed. ‘Jehu is King!’

3. Why did Jesus pick a colt? (cf. Zechariah 9:9-11)

a. Behold, your king is coming to you;

- i. righteous and having **salvation** is he,
- ii. humble and mounted on a donkey,
- iii. on a **colt**, the foal of a donkey.

4. What does Zech 9:9-11 imply, in regards to our understanding of Jesus’ main purpose/mission?

a. As for you also, because of the **blood of my covenant** with you,

b. I will **set your prisoners free** from the waterless pit.

c. We see here prisoners (the recipients/us) being set free, **because** of the blood of His covenant with us.
Pointing forward to what he will do on the cross

5. Notice how the celebrations and shouts of the long-awaited coming of the saving Messiah, and how it ended in v11. Why did it end in such an anti-climactic way?
 - a. Nothing, all the cheers and worship ended in Jesus returning to Bethany. The crowd disperses as mysteriously as it assembled.
 - b. ¹¹ And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.
 - i. The purpose of this question, is to tie in to questions below and the theme of not having **genuine** faith, but mere superficial or short-lived faith.

For the next section, read through the following:

- *Mark 11:12-14*
- *Isaiah 56 :1-8 – How Gentiles are able to partake in Israel's blessing*
- *Jeremiah 7:1-11 – True faith and obedience, not fake external offerings*

6. What is the condition of the fig tree? Why did Jesus curse it?

It has leaves. But no fruits.

'For it was not the season of figs' is not trying to show that Jesus is the antagonist here who just cursed a tree which is innocently obeying its seasons. To understand the text truly, it's best to understand the various seasons of the fig tree.

[After the fig harvest from mid-August to mid-October, the branches of fig trees sprout buds that remain undeveloped throughout the winter. Buds swell into small green knobs known in Hebrew as *paggim* in March-April, followed shortly by the sprouting of leaf buds on the same branches, usually in April. The fig tree thus produces fig knobs before it produces leaves. Once a fig tree is in leaf, one therefore expects to find branches loaded with *paggim* in various stages of maturation. This is implied in 11:13, where Jesus, seeing a fig tree in full foliage, turns aside in hopes of finding something edible. In the spring of the year the *paggim* are of course not yet ripened into mature summer figs, but they can be eaten, and often are by natives (Hos 9:10; Cant 2:13). The tree in v13 however, turns out to be deceptive, for it is green in foliage, but when Jesus inspects it he finds no *paggim*; it is a tree with the signs of fruit but with no fruit.

The most puzzling part of the brief narrative of the cursing of the fig tree is the end of 11:13, "because it was not the season of figs." This phrase is usually understood to vindicate the tree for not producing fruit since it was not yet the season. Understood as such, the phrase makes Jesus' curse vindictive and irrational, as Bertrand Russell deduced. But this is neither the only nor the best way to understand the phrase. It is better simply to distinguish between mature figs (Gk *syke*; Heb. *teenin*) and early or unripe figs (Heb. *poggin*). The end of v. 13 might be paraphrased, "It was, of course, not the season for figs, but it was for *paggim*." - Extra fact, Unnecessary to understand text.

Essentially, the tree should have fruits, because there was leaves! But no fruits were found.

Similarly, the temple worshipper should have fruits(true inner obedience), because there were leaves but there was none.

7. What were the people doing in the temple?

They were selling and buying in the temple(v15), exchange moneys and selling pigeons(v15), and carrying things through the temple (v16)

8. Why is Jesus so angry about this?

a. The temple was meant to be a place of sincere prayer, obedience, and repentance(Jer 7:5-7). But the people have perverted the sacrificial system, thinking it is sufficient to cover all the sins that they have and continue committing (Jer 7:8-10).

b. Not only that. But it has misguided/impeded the Gentiles from offering true worship, Isaiah 56:1 ~ 'Keep justice, and do righteousness.'

9. Why do the chief priests and scribes want to destroy him?

Because they feared Jesus (v18).

a. They feared his teaching, which was accusing them of being 'robbers'

b. They feared his actions, for he was condemning the whole superficial system of buying, selling and offering system, and their traditions as well.

c. They feared his popularity, cause it'll be harder to kill him. (ch 14:2 ~ lest there be an uproar from the people.)

Mark 11:20-26

10. Markan Sandwich of the Fig Tree

Sandwich Layering	Verses	Underlying Meaning
Upper Bread	12-14	How the 'seemingly' fruitful, but actually deceiving fig tree with all its leaves, but having no fruits. Have withered because of the curse from Jesus, 'May no one ever eat fruit from you again'.
Meat (Gist)	15-19	Superficial worship within the temple. - All the burnt offerings, but having no actual obedience and reverence within. (Rich in the leaves of a formal religion, but barren of all the fruits of the spirit)
Lower Bread	20-22	<i>The tree has withered away to its roots. v21</i>

A parallelism of the Fig Tree and Israel.

Leaves - Good works

Fruits - True obedience and reverence

Tree - Israel

11. Why did Jesus told Peter to 'Have faith in God'?

a. Because he was astonished that the fig tree that Jesus cursed has really withered.

- i. Perhaps he didn't expect the tree to physically wither and die. And so was surprised that the tree really did wither

12. How was genuine faith described by Jesus?

- a. 'Believing that mountains can be thrown into the sea, and doesn't doubt' (23a)
- b. Believe that it will come to pass (v23b)
- c. Believe that you have received/are receiving it (v24)

13. According to Jesus, what should be our attitude when we pray?

- a. That we have faith in God, and believe that it will come to pass. (v23)
- b. That we forgive others when we pray, that He may forgive us as well. (v25)
 - i. Why the sudden mention of forgiveness? Because forgiveness is the main relational component between us and the father. How we have rebelled against him (sin), and how we're to be truly reconciled to Him (through His forgiveness). Thus true faith always requires that we 'forgive one another, that our Father in heaven may forgive us our trespasses'.

14. Does verse 24 mean, literally, that 'whatever' we ask for will be answered as long as we believe? (cf. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15), Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36), 1 John 3:22, James 4:3))

- a. No, our prayers should imitate those of Christ, in principle. Where we ask for what we need (our daily bread |Mt, according to His commandments| 1Jn), and that we be delivered from evil and temptation(Mt), and that His will be done (Not my will, but yours be done)
- b. It shouldn't be 'asked to spend on our passions, that is why we do not receive.' (James 4:3)

Application

15. Summarize the big idea of the passage in a short sentence.

16. Is it right to have only the leaves (Works) or the fruits (Heart)? What should be the right picture?

17. As professing Christians..

- a. In what ways are you participating/contributing in church?
- b. What is your reason for doing these? Is it a response to our faith in Christ, or is it borderline works that seeks praises/consolation for ourselves?

18. Do we, as students. Commonly only come to God in prayer only with our examination, relational and situational problems? Is this right?

19. Do we commonly think about things that we need to forgive others about, before coming to God in prayer?

Prayer Points

- Help us to constantly reflect, and with His help, be genuinely faithful to what He has done on the cross
- Help us to be faithful to Him, our God and King

Study 19: “Questions and Answers” (Mark 11:27-12:17)

Getting started

1. Share one time when you denied something good/ you were the one being denied. How did you react towards it?

Context

Last study, we learned that Jesus, the prophesied Saviour King of the world has finally come to Jerusalem. He comes to the temple expecting to find sincere repentance, and prayer but instead, it has become a place for hypocrites who falsely come with superficial offerings without repentance and true prayer. It ends with Jesus, teaching us of the importance of true faith in God, and forgiveness, with its manifestation in prayer.

Digging in

Read Mark 11:27-12:17.

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
11:27--33 and 12:13--17	Assaults on Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders/ the opposition
12:1--11	Jesus interprets these assaults and establishes his authority.

Read Mark 12:1-12 (the meat)

Characters	Roles	Consequences
Owner (God)	Plant vineyard, lease to tenants. (create His people)	Destroy the tenants, give the vineyard to others.
Tenants (The opposition)	Take care of the vineyard, gather the harvest and give it to the owner (given stewardship by God)	Mistreated the servants; killed the servants and the son, in order to inherit the vineyard
Owner’s servants (God’s servants, prophets)	obey to instructions, collect some the harvest from tenants. (what all God’s prophets do, e.g. John)	Beaten, sent away empty handed; struck on the head, treated shamefully, killed.
Owner’s beloved son (Jesus)	The heir of the vineyard; To be respected; was sent to collect the harvest as the final resort; obeyed his father. (God’s beloved Son(1:11) was sent to the world)	Get killed and thrown out of the vineyard

3. What does the vineyard in verse 1 mean? (cf. Isaiah 5:1-7)

Israel, God’s people

4. From verse 12 we know that the purpose of the parable is to go against them, what is Jesus trying to imply?

-serious judgement on the religious leaders of Israel and anyone who knowingly reject God, they are far from repenting and still find many ways to arrest and kill Jesus at the end.

5. What is the significance of Jesus ending the parable with the scripture? (cf. Psalm 118:22-23)
 (* "Have you not read this Scripture" implies that it is not any OT verses that Jesus simply use, but it was what the religious leaders should have known before)

- the Scripture serves as another picture of reversed rejection
- speaks of victory over enemies.
- The religious leaders of Israel might have rejected Jesus but in God's providence he is to become the cornerstone.
- This might be temple imagery where Jesus is indicating that even though the old temple is under judgment, he is the new temple. He has answered the religious leaders' question of 11:28 as the beloved son and as the cornerstone, he has total authority to judge unrepentant Israel.

Read Mark 11:27-33; 12:13-17 (the bread)

6. How will the question from the opposition (the chief priests, the scribes and the elders) in v28 trap Jesus?

If Jesus answers...	Consequences will be...
Authority from God	Accused of blasphemy; have right to be killed
Authority from man	Jesus has no authority at all; worthy of judgement for such audacious behaviour

7. What was Jesus' counter question? How was it answered by the opposition? (v30)

8. Do they really mean what they said? Why?

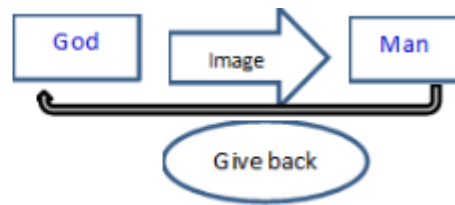
- No, they do know it is from God, yet they refuse to acknowledge John's authority and hence they refuse to acknowledge Jesus's authority.
- John's baptism was a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (1:4).
- Therefore, not to acknowledge it is to implicitly refuse to repent and to refuse to go the way of forgiveness (cf. 11:25).
- They do not have faith and will not be saved from the coming judgement (11:22--25).

9. Looking at Mark 12:13-17, what was the question posed by the Pharisees and the Herodians? How is it designed to trap Jesus?

If Jesus answers...	Consequences will be...
Yes	Jews will hate Jesus

No	Romans will hate Jesus
----	------------------------

10. What was Jesus' response to this?



What do we know about authority through this study?

- 11:28; 12:6

- Son of owner and Son of God has authority through relationship with the owner and God.

- If we see the son/ Son, we see the owner/ God

- In 12: 17, the call to render to God the things which are God's is a call for worshipful obedience which is to recognize the Son.

Application

11. From this study, we know that rejection towards God is a very serious issue. In today's context, what are the things we do/say are still clearly rejecting God? What should be our right response?
12. In reality, as a student/ working adult, how would it look like to render to God the things which are God's?

Prayer points

Pray that we will:

- *Recognize Jesus's authority*
- *Obey Jesus*
- *Keep each other accountable by encouraging one another to render to God the things which are God's*
- *Be able to speak to other people who are still rejecting God/challenging God's authority.*

Study 20: “The Greatest Commandment” (Mark 12:18-44)

Getting started

1. When you were younger, have you tried asking your teacher or parents a question about something you thought you knew better? What was your intention of doing so?

Context

After Jesus and his disciples have reached Jerusalem, there are many incidents where Jesus is being challenged in public on His authority. Chapter 12 practically consists of a series of questions from the religious leaders. Last 2 studies we saw questions from Sanhedrin, the Pharisees and the Herodians. Today we will see other groups of religious leaders challenging Jesus and how Jesus responds while teaching the crowd about God and His Kingdom.

Digging in

Read Mark 12:18-44

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
12:18-27	God of the living; not the dead
12:28-34	The greatest commandment
12:35-37	Christ: Whose son?
12: 38—40	Exterior Religiousness
12:41-44	The widow’s offering

Read Mark 12:18-27

3. Who are the Sadducees and what do they believe in?

This was an aristocratic, priestly sect of Judaism that controlled the High Priesthood and the Sanhedrin. They were wealthy and politically powerful group. They were very conservative and accepted only the writings of Moses as authoritative.

They do not believe in the resurrection.

4. What did the Sadducees asked Jesus? Why? (cf. Deut 25:5-10)

Referring to Deut 25:5-10, focusing on the Levirate marriage. In accordance to the Jewish law, the inheritance rights were very important in Israel because God had given the Promised Land to the tribes by lot. Therefore, if a man died with no male heir, his brother was expected to marry the widow and father a child by the widow; the child then became the heir of all of the dead brother’s property. And whose wife will the widow be? And how can one wife be married to seven men in heaven?

They are trying to ridicule the concept of bodily resurrection in a physical afterlife.

5. How did Jesus responds to the question? Why?

They seem to be challenging that it is absurd to be resurrected bodily since it messes up the relationships. Jesus blatantly says they lack understanding of the Scripture and God.

6. How did Jesus make his argument regarding resurrection?

God is the God of the living, not the dead.

Referencing to Exodus 3:6 (the part of Scripture the Sadducees believed in), God makes himself known to Moses, it cannot mean that he is the God of dead. Rather, as God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (a faithful God who keeps his covenant)

Read Mark 12:28-34

7. What did Jesus say to the scribes when they ask which commandment is the most important of all? (cf. Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18)

Referencing to OT – Deut 6:5, Jesus says the most important commandment is to love the Lord your God completely. And second Jesus introduce the commandment of loving your neighbour as yourself. Which is the tie between the theological truth to practical command, as it is impossible for God's people to love God but hates those made in His image.

8. How is the scribe's response different from the rest? And how did Jesus respond to his reaction?

The scribe is different from other Jewish leaders, he had a great understanding about the relationship between faith and rituals. He understands that it's more important to have a proper motive and faith instead of focusing on other rituals such as offerings.

However, Jesus says to him "You are not far from the Kingdom" instead of "your faith has saved you" indicates that even though he is wise, but he still did not recognise who Jesus is – the Son of God; Messiah.

Read Mark 12:35-37

9. The scribes say that the Christ is the son of David. What is Jesus' point in quoting the psalm? (cf. Ps 110:1-5)

Jesus asks the crowd who is the Messiah, is he the son of David or the Lord of David. He points to how the Christ is greater than David, since he called Him Lord.

(The reference to Psalm is affirming the divinity of Jesus as the Messiah. And he will be sitting at the right hand of God. And God will put his enemies under his feet.)

Read Mark 12:38-44

10. What is Jesus' warning here about?

He warns them about the scribes who seemed holy but they seek for public recognition by their clothing, their hypocritical behaviour and action to devour widows' houses.

Jesus warns about their condemnation, just like how he describes in the parable of the Tenants (those who are supposed to take care of God's people but sin against God instead).

11. What did Jesus observed when the people are making their offerings?

The rich people will put in huge offerings, a poor widow came and put two copper coins.

12. What is the significance of their attitude through their offering?

Even though the widow gave only two copper coin (one copper coin is 1/128th of a denarius), she contributed more than others. Because she gave out of poverty instead of abundance.

This signifies her love for God, in her being sacrificial.

Application

In this chapter we see many religious teachers and leaders challenging Jesus. We often forget or overlook the warning of Jesus towards those who oppose God. Even the Pharisees thought they knew God but they are warned about and their condemnation is certain.

13. Have we been behaving like these leaders? Have we start to use our understanding of Scriptures for our own gain and exterior religiousness, instead of furthering God's kingdom? Are there mixed motives?
14. Do we truly teach God's words faithfully or focus more on the public recognition?
15. Reflect on your offering to God - heart, time, energy, money etc. Are you giving out of comfort, or are sacrificially? (Consider Jesus' words in Mark 8:34-37 as you reflect.)
16. In what ways are you struggling to love God and people?
17. What do you believe is more important, that stops you from doing this?

Prayer

Lord, as we share the gospel to others who hear it, help us to convey the gospel message in a faithful manner, instead of pandering to what the audience likes to hear at the expense of the truth. Amen.

Study 21: “Be on Your Guard!” (Mark 13)

Getting started

1. If you knew that the thief is coming to your house tonight, what would you do to get ready for his “arrival”?

Context

In chapter 12, Jesus addressed his opponents when they asked him difficult questions to test Him after he spoke the parable of the tenants that they perceived was addressed against them (12:1-12). In the end, Jesus warned his hearers against the teachers of the law and commended the widow who gave everything she had. This week, we will be looking at the warnings Jesus presented to His hearers about the certainty of the end times that is to come and how his disciples are to respond to it.

Digging in

Read Mark 13

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
13: 1-2	Prophecy of the Temple’s Destruction
13: 3- 8	The signs of the beginning of the end times
13: 9-13	The reality of persecution at the beginning of the end times
13:14-27	Description of the end times
13: 28-37	Be ready for the end

Read Mark 13:1-2

3. What did Jesus say will happen to the Temple of Jerusalem? Why?

Jesus foretells that the temple will be utterly destroyed – not one stone will be left on another (v.2). This temple wasn’t just any temple. It was a temple of marvellous construction – it was rebuilt when the exiles came back from exile and further renovated by Herod. Jesus probably mentioned the temple’s destruction not just to answer the question the disciple asked but to set the stage for what he was about to teach them in the following verses after v2.

Read Mark 13:3-8

4. What did the disciples want and what did Jesus give them?

V4 The disciples wanted to know what signs to expect and when they will show up.

V5-6 : Jesus instead warns them that there will a rise of false Christs and somehow they will lead many astray

V7 – 8: They will hear about political instability (wars and rumours of wars) and cosmic upheavals but the end has not yet come

Jesus does not give them the signs they want but he prepares them for tribulation with warnings and instructions.

Read Mark 13:9-13

5. Why does Jesus warn the disciples to be on their guard?

What will happen:

v.9,11,12,13 – The disciples and the believers will be persecuted from all levels from family to national level. The nature of persecution will be highly intense (they will be persecuted by the State) and personal (their own families will not just betray them but also have them killed)

How are they supposed to respond:

v. 9,10,11 – They are to bear witness the gospel to their persecutors. However, they will not do it with their own wisdom or strength but with the help of the Holy Spirit (v.11). The Holy Spirit will help them by giving them the words to speak at the hour when they stand trial before their persecutors.

v.13 – Jesus also makes it clear that they are to persevere to the end.

Read Mark 13:14-27

6. What is this abomination of desolation or who is it?

V.14 – The abomination of desolation will stand where he ought not to. Likely referring to Daniel 11 and more specifically Daniel 11:31.

They aren't clear description of what exactly the abomination of desolation is but there are a few things we can infer; Abomination usually refers to something that is holy/good is desecrated and it becomes sacrilege (for example King Manasseh of Judah set up the Asherah pole; a foreign god that God has told the Israelites not to worship inside the Holy of Holies of the Temple of Jerusalem, hence desecrating the temple of the Lord with a foreign God) while desolation refers to destruction. Hence putting 2 and 2 together; the abomination of desolation could likely refer to the coming of an abomination which cause destruction (there is likelihood this refers to the coming of the Roman army which will destroy the temple of Jerusalem and sack the city as well in AD 70).

7. How severe will the tribulation be and how is God's grace shown during those times? (cf. v17-27)

It will be a very hard and severe tribulation times v.17 -19 and similar to v.6; a time full of false Christs. This will be a time of distress for the believers.

God shows His grace not by cancelling the tribulation but acts in grace towards His children: by cutting short those days for the sake of the elect (v.20), warning beforehand to be on their guard (v.23) and eventually saving them (v.27)

Read Mark 13:28-35

8. So what can we learn from the fig tree?

Jesus warns them that just as the fig tree's physical appearance changes to hint change in seasons, there will be signs that will appear when the words of Jesus spoke will come to pass. Jesus chillingly further emphasised that all that He said will take place before this generation (reference to the people of his day and each generation was about 40 years) passes away. Hence these things will happen in the lifetime of the disciples and the hearers of these words

9. What did Jesus emphasised that a believer must do in these times?

V35 – 37 Be awake and be on your guard!

Application

10. In this chapter we see that terrible things will happen to the believers in Jesus's day but what does this mean for us?

- a. The passage seems to make it clear that suffering does not relieve us (followers of Christ) from the duty of preaching the gospel. How are you persevering in preaching the gospel lately?
- b. The 2nd point that is clear that we can see is God doesn't make suffering disappear or exempt us from suffering even though we follow Him but emphasised that we must persevere to the end. How does persevering looks like to us as individual Christians? As a collective body of the church?

11. The closing of chapter 13, Jesus also emphasised for us not to be sleeping and be on our guard since he is coming again for sure. What are we doing to ensure we don't sleepwalk in our faith? What are we doing to remind our brothers/sisters of the faith not to sleepwalk?

Study 22: “Jesus is Going to Die” (Mark 14:1-11)

Getting started

1. Do you remember selling something or giving up something precious of yours for the first time for the sake of others? How did that feel?

Context

In the previous study, we saw how Jesus warned of the end times and exhorted people to be on their guard, for they would not know when the time will come. Today, we will be looking at the beginning of a set of events that will ultimately lead to Jesus’ death on the cross.

Digging in

Read Mark 14:1-11

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title (What you think Mark was saying)
v1-2	Bun1: Religious leaders plot to arrest and kill Jesus.
v3-6	Tomato1: Unknown woman seemingly wastes expensive oil on Jesus.
v7	Meat: Responding to Jesus as the Christ through total love and devotion to him.
v8-9	Tomato2: The unknown woman did all she could to serve Jesus, acknowledging his death by anointing him ahead of time.
v10-11	Bun 2: Religious leaders’ plot thickens as Judas sells out Jesus.

3. Why were the chief priests and scribes eager to arrest Jesus “by stealth” ?

It was just two days to the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread which meant that Jews from all over the world would be pouring into Jerusalem for the celebrations. With so many people in the city, an arrest might result in an “uproar” which would upset the Roman government of the time. Also, Jesus had fans (people astonished by his teachings) who would also have stirred up a riot if he was arrested publicly (Mark 11:18, 12:12). It is important to note that they were “seeking how” to arrest him as they have been (Mark 3:6, 12:12-13) which implied that they had no reasonable cause that warranted an arrest - Jesus was innocent.

4. Why did the disciples respond so harshly toward the unnamed woman’s act?

Fun facts: Alabaster is a translucent mineral which was commonly used for sculpting and making jars or flasks. Spikenard or nard was an essential oil derived from a flower that grows in India and China (not very near to Israel) which was used as perfume. Anyway, it was “very costly”, “300 denarii” (daily wages back then was a denarii) a whole year’s worth of wages. This extravagantly expensive, imported, undiluted (pure) oil was spilled over a penniless Jewish teacher’s head. Try to contextualise a little bit with a contemporary example (spending maybe RM 48, 000 on a bottle of French red wine which was used up to cook my aunty’s beef stew). Therefore, it seemed like a waste as compared to using the money to help many poor people. This point needs to sink in because the disciples seem to have pretty righteous and benevolent intentions if indeed Jesus was just a typical Jewish teacher.

5. What was the implied message that the disciples give Jesus through their response to the unnamed woman? What does this show about their understanding of who Jesus is and what He came to do? It will be helpful to break down the question: when the disciples said these things to the woman, what were they really saying to Jesus?

To say that pouring the ointment on Jesus' head was a "waste" is simply saying that Jesus is not worth that much devotion and adoration. In Mark 12:30 and 43-44, we saw that love toward God should be demonstrated with totality because The Lord our God is one. Therefore, He deserves all the love and devotion. At this point, the disciples still don't get who Jesus is because if they did, they would not have scolded the unnamed lady for doing such a "beautiful thing".

6. In verse 7, is Jesus being self-obsessed and dismissing the act of helping the poor as unimportant? (cf. Deut 15:11, 4-5)

This could be easily misunderstood as Jesus permitting the disciples to neglect the poor but that would definitely contradict Jesus' own compassion for the poor (Mark 10:21). His quotation of Deut 15:11 is not to imply that poverty will never be eradicated but there will be endless opportunities to help the poor; it is ongoing work. However, Jesus is about to die; he is about to accomplish his mission which the disciples do not understand despite him predicting it (Mark 8:31-33, 9:30-32, 10:32-34) three times. Hence, there is a sense of priority and urgency to understand Jesus' identity and mission which will inform an appropriate response to him i.e. demonstrate total devotion like the woman. Deut 15:4-5 shows that God will eradicate poverty in His promised land (ultimately in the New Creation) if Israel obey Him. Obedience in regards to Deut 15:4-5 is shown a few verses down in verse 11. So, if God's people were obedient to Him, there would be no poor. If Jesus' disciples were totally devoted to him, they would also be willing to make sacrifices for the poor.

7. How do verses 8 and 9 point to the Good News?

Jesus called the woman's act of devotion an anointing for burial. This points directly to Jesus' death and eventual resurrection which he predicted 3 times. Note that Jesus had to die before he would resurrect which definitely is Good News. Also, Jesus affirmed that the gospel will be preached to the nations (Mark 13:10) and that this unnamed woman's example which glorifies Jesus will be remembered.

8. Compare and contrast the unnamed woman and Judas in the table below.

Person	Unnamed Woman	Judas
Who is this?	untold stranger.	One of the 12
What did s/he do?	V8 done all she could i.e. bought expensive oil and anointed Jesus' body for burial.	V10 Betrayed Jesus for a sum of money.
Result	Remembered every time the gospel is preached for her devotion.	Remembered for his act such that a traitor is referred to as a Judas in common language.

9. What is the significance of Judas betraying Jesus? (cf. Mark 9:31 and 10:33)

The two references show the second and third times when Jesus predicted his death where he mentioned that he would be “**delivered**” into the hands of men which was translated from παραδίωμι (paradidōmi). In the context of Mark 14, this same Greek word was translated to “**betray**” in verses 10 and 11. The significance here is that God is always sovereign and no one can thwart His plan. Verse 10-11 may seem evil, selfish and even sad but it turned out for the good of God’s purposes. Judas’ betrayal of Jesus was part of the plan (Acts 1:16).

Application

10. What does it mean to give Jesus total devotion? (cf. Mark 12:29-30)

Total devotion is best summed up in the Shema (that means Hear O Israel or LISTEN UP! in Hebrew) which is found in Mark 12:29-30. It is recognising that all of life belongs to God. Life has to be 100% for Jesus or not at all. As Peter Adam said, “If my life does not honour God, I’d rather die.” That is the attitude of total devotion. However, we do not want people to think that devotion is cultic because we are not making an idol out of Jesus. Devotion has to be relational which means listening to/obeying God (Shema). Hence, we should read God’s Word because you would not ignore a person’s words if you loved him/her.

11. How much devotion should we be giving to Jesus? How much devotion are we actually giving to Jesus?

The answer for the first part of the question is vital. Most might give one or two-word answers like, “everything”, “total devotion”, “the world”, etc. Now those answers are not wrong but it will be helpful to ask “What does that mean?” The ideal response here is that they understand that total devotion means giving all that we can like the woman’s example. When all of that is settled, part two of the question requires us to reflect even deeper. Again, people are tempted to say things like, “very little” or “got lah” or “I don’t know”. We want them to see that no matter how devoted we are, it is never enough. Jesus is worth devoting all of life to.

12. What would it mean for us if we do not give Jesus our total devotion?

We will be just like Judas who gave Jesus away for something else. Or in the words of the text, we would be betraying Jesus. After all, Jesus died to save sinful people like us. He deserves all love and devotion from us. If we don’t give him what he rightfully deserves, we are robbing him of it. Most of us like Jesus as Saviour because he rescued us from God’s wrath but we don’t want him as Lord because that means submitting to him and obeying him - total devotion to him.

13. How can we be devoting our lives to Jesus completely? What needs to change?

It would be helpful here to not ask for immediate responses but to let the others reflect and perhaps jot down practical examples within areas of life which they know they need to change. I reckon that for most people, it will be about devoting more time and energy to ministry or fellowship with church. Some prompts that may be helpful for others and ourselves to think about:

a) How we should spend our time

-studying God’s Word with God’s people (coming to UCF/GG/TNT/KVBC and going to CF). *Please encourage people to go to their CFs because they spend most of their week on campus.

-actively looking for opportunities to talk to others about Jesus

- serving in church (could be anything from Bible reading to ushering. Talk about Ministry of the Pew)
- b) How we should spend our money
 - Saving money for conferences and camps that will allow opportunities for fellowship and growing in God's Word
 - Showing kindness to the poor with some form of financial support so that a relationship can be built which will open a door for evangelism
 - Tithing/donating to church
 - Travelling to meet up with people for personal follow-ups

The key question to ask people is: does that (their examples) show other people that you are totally devoted to Christ?

Prayer

Pray for each other to be committed to making those changes so that we can all live lives that are completely devoted to Jesus and that others will see it and give glory to God.

Study 23: “God’s Sovereignty and Human Responsibility”

(Mark 14:12-52)

Getting started

1. What is the Holy Communion and why do we do it at church?

Context

Last week, we learned that responding to Jesus’ death has eternal implications. In the book of Mark, we’re made to consider who Jesus is. We’ve seen what He is capable of, and He is constantly challenging His disciples to see that He is the promised Messiah. As we ponder the identity of Jesus, we are driven to recognise who Jesus is for ourselves and ask if we have responded rightly to Him in faith.

Digging in

Read Mark 14:12-52.

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
12-25	The last supper
26-31	Jesus predicts Peter’s denial
32-42	Gethsemane
43-52	Jesus arrested

Read Mark 14:12-25

3. Jesus’ control over the events leading to his death is a major theme in Mark 14. How does Jesus demonstrate his control and God’s authority in this passage?

Jesus demonstrates his total control over the situation in v.13-16 as he commands the disciples to follow a detailed set of instructions. He has foreknowledge of the events which are about to unfold. As Jesus and his disciples began to eat together in v.17-21, he predicts that he will be betrayed by one of them and once more demonstrates his foreknowledge – that his death has already been foretold by Scriptures (cf. Isaiah 53:12).

4. What is the significance of the disciples’ reactions to Jesus’ announcement that he will be betrayed? All of them imagined it might be them (v.19). So, while Jesus makes clear that the action Judas is about to take is terrible (v.21b), there is a sense in which it could have been any of the disciples. There is ambiguity in the portrayal of the disciples at this point, but we will find out more later in the passage.

5. Why is the timing (v12) so important? What was Passover?

In Exodus 11-13, the Israelites were on the point of escaping from their slavery in Israel. God had already sent terrible plagues on Egypt to persuade the Pharaoh to let them go free, but Pharaoh had consistently refused. Finally, God was going to send the last and most terrible judgement. Every firstborn son in every household would be killed. The Israelites, however, were told to sacrifice a lamb and paint its blood on their doorposts. That way, the destroying angel would know which were God’s

people, and 'pass over' their houses. The people of Israel would be saved from God's judgement. After that, the Israelites remembered their salvation each year by celebrating the Passover feast.

6. How does Jesus re-interpret the Passover meal?

He gives a new kind of interpretation of the elements. The bread is his body (broken), the wine is his blood (poured out). Interpreting the wine as blood would be particularly radical, because Jewish people were revolted by the idea of drinking any blood ("clean" meat was drained of blood).

7. What is the point of Jesus' very graphic visual aids in verses 22-24 (cf. Genesis 15:7-10; Exodus 24:3-8)?

God established a covenant of grace with Abraham which was ratified through bloody death (cf. Genesis 15:10). This principle of ratification through bloody death continues in every subsequent administration of this covenant (e.g. the Mosaic administration of the covenant is confirmed by blood in Exodus 24:3-8). So, Jesus is saying his death will be the ratification of the final administration of the covenant God made with Abraham. All that this covenant looked forward to, all that the subsequent administrations of the covenant anticipated is now about to come to pass in his death. His blood will be poured out for many. Jesus emphasises the once and for all nature of his death by his assertion that he will not drink again until the final kingdom (v.25). Jesus is the Passover lamb. Therefore, in inviting his disciples to eat and drink, Jesus is inviting them to appropriate his death for themselves. He gives himself for them and to them and invites them to share in the benefits of his death.

Read Mark 14:26-31

8. In v.27 who is the 'I' who will strike and who is 'the shepherd' (read Zechariah 13:7)? What amazing insight does this give us into the Cross?

The Lord of hosts, God. the striking is God's work, He's in control. Jesus emphasises this note of divine sovereignty as he reassures the disciples that he will be raised and will go ahead of them into Galilee (v.28).

9. What is wrong with the disciples' response in verses 29-31?

Zech 13 tells us the scattering will be God's work too. Peter's exalting himself. Jesus humbles him – he will be the one to deny Jesus three times. Peter was not the only one – they all deny Jesus' words (v.31) and later in the passage scatter. Jesus is making clear the weakness of the human heart and the deep need we have for him to die for us.

Read Mark 14:32-42

10. What is the 'cup' in verse 36 and what is its significance (cf. Isaiah 51:17; Jeremiah 25:15-29, 49:12)?

The cup Jesus speaks of is the cup of God's wrath which he will drink at the cross in order that God's people need not drink it. The narrative in this passage focuses on the very real suffering of Jesus in the garden - Jesus is, 'greatly distressed and troubled', his soul, 'is very sorrowful, even unto death'. The reason for this agony is not just the fact that Jesus knows he is soon to be killed. Rather the key is found in v.36. Jesus, as someone who is fully human, recoils at the thought of taking the cup. But,

he is totally committed to doing the Father's purpose hence he prays in v.36b, "Yet not what I will, but what you will."

11. Re-read Mark 13:37. What does the disciples' behaviour at Gethsemane suggest?
Peter's three-fold denial Jesus has predicted in v.30 is mirrored in this threefold sleep. The disciples fail to be on guard and so are unprepared for the events of judgement which are about to unfold. They will be scattered. Their slumbers are shattered in v.41-42. The betrayal Jesus has foretold in v.21 is about to happen and Jesus knows it. All that he has predicted and prepared the disciples for is now to take place – 'the hour has come'.

Read Mark 14:43-52

12. Why didn't they arrest Jesus in the daytime as he taught in the temple?
This happens now in order that 'the Scriptures be fulfilled'. This probably refers to the prophecy of Zechariah 13. The betrayal and arrest of the shepherd marks the beginning of the divine strike. This understanding is confirmed by v.50-52. The striking of the shepherd is accompanied by the scattering of the sheep. God is in control.
13. What is the irony in the disciples scattering and in verse 51?
Judas betrayed him, the other disciples left him and fled. Judas is the betrayer, but the disciples are deniers. There is a difference (betrayers actively plot to get rid of Jesus whereas deniers passively abandon him), but ultimately after having promised unconditional devotion to Jesus, they all turned away from Jesus quite soon after. Their sleepiness in the garden results in the ultimate denial of Jesus. The young man follows Jesus, but the persecution of men is more than he can bear. Rather than be associated with a soon to be crucified man he would rather bear the shame of nakedness. The section presses how much the human heart needs to be changed though the death of Jesus. While God is in control, Jesus' closest disciples also chose to abandon him.

Application

14. Do we make similar commitments and resolutions to Jesus like the disciples?
15. What is the good news for sinners (including the disciples) from this passage?
16. Is salvation me committing myself to Jesus or Jesus committing himself to drink the cup instead of me? How does this affect our message in evangelism and our personal assurance?

Prayer

Pray for one another over what you have learned from this passage.

Study 24: “Jesus Rejected and Mistreated By All” (Mark 14:53-72)

Getting started

1. What do you think is the worst form of rejection that anyone could ever face?

Context

Last week, we read about Jesus’ new interpretation of the Passover meal – to invite many to appropriate his death for themselves and share in the benefits. We also read about Jesus’ painful prayer in Gethsemane – which ended in His arrest, while the rest of his disciples, as predicted, fled and abandoned him.

Digging in

Read Mark 14:53-72

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
V53-59	Jesus brought before the Council
V60-65	High Priest probes Jesus, Jesus condemned
V66-72	Peter denies Jesus

Read Mark 14:53-59 – Jesus brought before the Council

3. Observe the different ‘characters’ mentioned in this portion of the passage. How have their interactions with Jesus been prior to this, and how is it now?
 - Chief priests and elders and scribes: the group that’s **consistently** been trying to catch and accuse Jesus, the group that Jesus had predicted would hand him over to the Gentiles. (Mark 8:31, 10:33) They’re now about to fulfill Jesus’ predictions.
 - Peter: one of Jesus’ closest disciples, who had previously said he would never deny him, but now only following Jesus from a distance. (Gotta give him credit for being the only one who came along though. Yet this wasn’t enough, this wasn’t the costly discipleship that Jesus required. Mark 8:34)
4. What does the fact that the chief priests and the whole Council were ‘seeking testimony’ against Jesus imply?
 - They still didn’t have any grounds to arrest him, they were all only keen on pushing their own agenda, rather than seeking truth.
 - According to Mosaic law (Deut 17:6), there was a need for at least two witnesses, and false witnessing was prohibited (Ex23:1). Despite supposedly being experts of the law, they neglected what was clearly spelled out and denied Jesus a just trial.
 - The trial was in some sense pointless, because they had already decided on the verdict.

5. Read John 2:19, and compare it with their accusation in v58. What was wrong with their “accusation”?

For one, they misquoted Jesus; he didn't claim to be the one to destroy the Temple. Plus, Jesus was speaking figuratively about himself, rather than the physical Temple – but, again, they clearly didn't understand that.

Read Mark 14:60-65 – High Priest probes Jesus, Jesus condemned

6. Was the High Priest genuinely trying to get Jesus to defend himself that he might be vindicated? Why or why not?

No, he was merely trying to goad Jesus into saying something that could be used against Him.

7. What is the significance of Jesus' response (or the lack of it) in v61? (cf. Isaiah 53:7)

Jesus' silence is a fulfilment of the prophecies of the suffering servant, Jesus is God's 'sacrificial lamb' that remains silent in the face of 'slaughter' before his 'shearers'.

8. What was the role of the high priest prescribed in Lev. 16:15? How has the high priest in this passage performed that role?

- Aaron, the first high priest, (and the other high priests to come), is commissioned to kill the lamb of atonement each year.
- In this passage, the high priest is responsible for the death of the final and ultimate lamb of atonement, Jesus.

9. Compare the high priest's question with Mark's introduction in Mark 1:1. How does Jesus respond, and what's the significance of these descriptions? (cf. Daniel 7, Psalm 110:1)

- The high priest asks Jesus to confirm his identity in the same terms that Mark began his narrative.
- Jesus affirms the high priest's question and goes on to use the Messianic references from Daniel 7 and Ps 110:1 to imply that He is the divine figure, who will be exalted to the throne of God, returning in glory to judge them – a reversal of their current positions.
- Note that Jesus very well knew that this response was self-incriminating, the grounds on which he would be condemned and killed.

10. What were the responses to Jesus' answer? What do these responses show? (v63-65)

- The high priest tore his garments, usually a sign of extreme grief / sorrow / rage, and accused Jesus of blasphemy; the rest condemned him as deserving death (Lev 24:16), spat on him (Isaiah 50:6), struck him.
- These responses show how strong Jesus' words were, that if they weren't true, they were blasphemous – but if they were true, then the guilt would be on the for charging an innocent man. The Council had a desired verdict; they had already decided that it was the former even before the trial – that Jesus was blaspheming rather than proclaiming the truth; this Jesus,

arrested and bound by them, weak, abandoned by all His followers – He couldn't have been the Messiah.

Read Mark 14:66-72 – Peter denies Jesus

11. Read again what Peter had claimed in Mark 8:29 and Mark 14:29, 31. Now compare it with what's happening in v66-71 and Jesus' prediction in Mark 14:27,30. What does this show?

As discussed in the previous study, Peter was blind to the weakness of his own heart; he exalted himself and was confident of his unwavering faithfulness to Jesus. Jesus humbles him – and this episode of denial affirms what Jesus had predicted, exposing to Peter his weakness.

12. What sign of hope do we see in Peter from this passage and from Mark 14:28?

Peter breaks down in tearful remorse, in humble realization that he had rejected his Lord, the One he had confessed as Christ. Yet, this wouldn't be the end – his abandonment of Jesus wouldn't be forever, and Jesus had promised to 'go before them' to Galilee.

Application

13. We've seen how the different groups of the people have rejected Jesus – be it through their outward condemnation of Him, or through their denial of Him. In our lives, how have we who claim to be Jesus' disciples, rejected him?

14. As those who have at some point denied Jesus, how do we find comfort from this passage?

Prayer

Please pray for one another, as you reflect upon the passage.

Study 25: “The Crucifixion” (Mark 15:1-32)

Getting started

1. Imagine you have committed a serious crime that leads to a death sentence and someone else, stronger than you, is willing to take the punishment on your behalf. How would you feel and why?

Context

After the betrayal of Judas, Jesus was delivered before the Council where many testify and bore false witnesses to put Jesus to death. Jesus remained silent in the face of his accusers, demonstrating his fulfilment of the prophecies of the suffering servant. We also read about how Peter denies Jesus, exposing the weakness of his faithfulness to Jesus. Lastly, we see hope when Peter came to realize his rejection of his Lord but knowing that the abandonment of Jesus would not be forever.

Digging in

Read Mark 15:1-32

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
V 1 - 4	Jesus delivered to Pilate
V 6 - 15	Pilate condemns Jesus to crucifixion
V 16 - 20	Jesus is mocked
V 21 - 32	The Crucifixion

Read Mark 15:1-5 – *Jesus delivered to Pilate*

3. In Mark 14: 64, Jesus was accused of blasphemy by the Jews. Why is Jesus then delivered to Pilate?

- Since blasphemy is not a charge worthy of the death penalty under Roman rule, the Jewish leaders restate the charges when they hand Jesus to Pilate (Luke 23:2). A claim on kingship would be a direct challenge to Caesar.
- The whole Council did not have the right to execute a person. That right was reserved for Roman authorities, especially dealing with popular figures.
- Pilate was temporarily in Jerusalem “to keep the peace” during the Passover
- The Jewish authorities did not want to be busy with the case during the festive Passover day
- Fulfilled the Jesus’ predictions (Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33).
- In being delivered over to Gentiles, Jesus is taking upon himself the curses for breaking the Mosaic covenant (Deuteronomy 28:64-67). This is what the Servant of Isaiah does.

4. Jesus was interrogated by Pilate but he remained silent. What is the significance of Jesus’ response (or lack of it) and why do you think Pilate was amazed by that?

- Similar to last week, Jesus’ silence is a fulfilment of the prophecies of the suffering servant, Jesus is God’s ‘sacrificial lamb’ that remains silent in the face of ‘slaughter’ before his ‘shearers’ (Isaiah 53:7)
- Pilate recognized that Jesus is innocent and was amazed that he refused to defend himself.
- Pilate was also aware that the Jewish leaders have turned against him because they felt threatened by his popularity and his authoritative ministry (Mark 15:10)

Mark 15:6-15 – Pilate condemns Jesus to crucifixion

5. Comparing verses 10 and 14 to verse 15, explain the change in behavior of Pilate.
 - Pilate knows that the chief priests want Jesus dead out of envy (v 10) and the Jesus had done no evil (v 14). Yet, Pilate freed Barabbas, a terrorist and a criminal instead of Jesus, the righteous man who has not spoken against Rome. He did that to satisfy the crowd (v 15).
 - Pilate condemned Jesus to crucifixion, which was the means of executing criminals convicted of high treason. He even *scourged* Jesus, by itself could lead to death. (*Scourging is a Roman beating with a whip that has metal or bone spikes in it, which tore through skin and tissue, often exposing bones and intestines*)

6. Why does the crowd want Barabbas to be released and what is the significance of his release? (cf. Mark 10:45)
 - The crowd was stirred up by the chief priests to have Barabbas released instead of Jesus (v 11)
 - The innocent Jesus dies in order that the guilty criminal Barabbas can go free.
 - Jesus said that he would give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45) and this was demonstrated just before the cross itself.

Read Mark 15:16-20 – Jesus is mocked

7. In your own words, explain why the mocking of Jesus by the soldiers is ironic (v 16-20).
 - The soldiers see Jesus as an object of ridicule. They have, like Pilate recognized the key accusation: that Jesus claimed to be the King of the Jews and mocked him on that basis.
 - But Jesus is truly the King – who will be clothed in royal purple, crowned, hailed as king and paid homage, when he rises.

Read Mark 15:21-32 – The crucifixion

8. Why do you think that Mark refers to Simon of Cyrene as the father of Alexander and Rufus? (cf. Romans 16:13)
Mark assumes that his readers will know Alexander and Rufus possibly as those who have come to faith in Jesus through this event (cf. Rom 16:13).

9. In verse 24, what do you understand about crucifixion?
 - Crucifixion was considered the worst form of execution, due to the excruciating pain and public shame
 - Jesus' hands were nailed above the wrist on the horizontal beam, and his feet were placed with one above the other and then nailed to the vertical beam
 - Hanging suspended by one's arms caused great difficulty in breathing
 - Only pushing up with one's feet to take the weight off the arms could lessen the lack of breath. But the motion itself caused severe pain, forcing the exhausted victim to slump down again
 - Eventually the victim would suffocate or die from the physical trauma.

10. Observe the different characters who witnessed Jesus' crucifixion. What was their interaction with Jesus and their significance? Read also Psalm 22.

Characters	Interaction with Jesus	Significance
Simon of Cyrene (v 21)	Compelled by the soldiers to carry Jesus' cross	Jesus was severely weakened from the beating (v 15) and was unable to carry his cross.
The soldiers (v 24 - 26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Crucified Jesus - Divided his garments - Placed the inscription of the charge that read "The King of the Jews" 	<p>Divide garments fulfilled Psalm 22: 18</p> <p>Highlight the purpose and sovereignty of God in the death of Jesus</p>
Passers-by (v 29-30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Derided Jesus, wagging their heads and said Jesus would destroy the temple and rebuild it in 3 days - Asked Jesus to save himself and come down from the cross 	<p>Wagging their heads fulfilled Psalm 22: 7-8. Again, they misquoted Jesus; he didn't claim to be the one to destroy the Temple. He is innocent of this charge (John 2:19, Mark 14:58)</p> <p>V 30 – If Jesus came down from the cross, then the fulfilment of v 29 would not happen</p>
Chief priest and scribes (v 31)	Mocked Jesus by saying Jesus saved others but cannot save himself	<p>If Jesus saved himself, then he would not be able to save others.</p> <p>No sign would be given to them, particularly in this instance since the robbers are on the outside but to his followers, all these events are fulfilment of what the OT and Jesus predicted.</p> <p>Still in rejection of Jesus, deserve judgement by God but it is Jesus who bears the judgement.</p>
The two robbers (v 32)	Reviled Jesus	One of the robbers later repented and expressed faith in Jesus (Luke 23:39-43)

Note to leaders: It might also important for those in the group to come away with a greater appreciation for how it is that Jesus' death is something that happens according to God's purposes (i.e. God's servant who takes upon himself the punishment that Israel and everyone deserves for rebelling against God) and according to the predictions in the OT and those made by Jesus.

Application

11. In this passage, we see Jesus mocked by both Jews and Gentiles for claiming to be God's chosen King. How might we too be tempted to be ashamed of Jesus before our family and friends?
- Our silence about the good news could be our way of avoiding the ridicule and rejection that Jesus faced.
 - This is an opportunity for leaders to explore with the students how it is that while the world may mock Jesus as King, God is the one who was and is in complete control of everything. And so we need to be bold in proclaiming Jesus as God's chosen King who will come one day not to face judgement but as judge of

all. And whoever is ashamed of him in this world, of him will Jesus be ashamed when he returns (cf Mark 8:38).

12. Have you found yourself being rejected by people because of your faith in Christ? How do we find comfort from this passage?

Key points to share: When you find yourself rejected by the world, you can look to the sympathetic Jesus and be confident that He understands and cares; for He, too was rejected by the world (cf. John 16:33)

Prayer

O God, who is the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom stood our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom. Defend us, your humble servants, in all assaults of our enemies, such that we, trusting surely in your defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries, through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (adapted from the Book of Common Prayer)

Study 26: “The Most Crucial Death for Humanity” (Mark 15:33-47)

Getting started

1. Have you heard of any historical figure whose death has benefitted/affected a large group of people? What do you feel about their death?

Context

Last week we looked at three things, namely the innocent Jesus was condemned to death while the sinful Barabbas was released. Jesus, the true king was mocked and rejected by everyone, and the sufferings that are mentioned in Psalm 22 were accordingly fulfilled.

Digging in

Read Mark 15:33-47

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title
33-39	Jesus died for his people and they need it.
40-47	Jesus was truly dead.

Read Mark 15:33-39

3. There was darkness over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour of the day. What is this darkness signifying? (cf. Ex 10:21; Amos 8:9)
 - The darkness in daytime is an OT sign of judgment (cf. Ex 10:21; Amos 8:9)
 - The time of Jesus being on the cross is the time of him bearing the judgment, drinking the cup of wrath (c.f. 10:38; 14:35-36), and going through the baptism of death (c.f. 10:38).
4. What does it mean when Jesus said, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ on the cross? What do we learn from it?
 - Being a sacrificial lamb for his people, Jesus has to bear all their sins, which makes him be unacceptable before God, and he faces all the judgment that was supposed to bring his people into eternal death. Jesus suffers greatly because of this.
 - Jesus is quoting the first line of Psalm 22 here.
 - Psalm 22 is a psalm of David that points to Jesus, as what we read last week, many things in this psalm have been fulfilled in Jesus (E.g. get mocked, hands and feet get pierced, garment got divided)
 - Despite the psalmist is going through sufferings, he acknowledges God (v9-11), submit to Him (v19-21), praise Him (v22-26) and trust in what He has done (v27-31)

5. Some of the bystanders fed Jesus with sour wine after hearing what Jesus had said. Notice this is the second time that somebody offers Jesus wine (first time in v23), why did Jesus reject the first offer but accepted the second?
 - The first wine (v23) is meant to reduce the pain to be experienced by those who were crucified. Jesus refused to take it and he experienced the full course of suffering for his people's sin
 - The second wine (v36) is offered by some bystanders, who misunderstood Jesus calling Elijah, so they fed Jesus wine, not intended to reduce his pain, but to prolong his life to see whether Elijah will come to take Jesus down or not.
 - Psalm 69:21 is fulfilled in Jesus as he accepted the sour wine.

6. How did Mark describe Jesus' last moment before his death? What does it show about Jesus?
 - Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last, this convinces the centurion of Jesus' identity.
 - The Greek word for 'breathed his last' implies a deliberate death. Jesus chooses when he will die (presumably when the 'cup' is empty).

7. The curtain of the temple is one that separates the Holy Place from the Most Holy in the temple in Jerusalem. (Ex 26:33) What is Mark's intention of adding this incident that happens at another place in the story of Jesus' death?
 - The curtain of the temple kept sinners out of the Holy of Holies in the OT
 - The curtain is torn 'from top to bottom' signifies that it's God's doing, that He took the first step for the reversal of the broken relationship.
 - The way to God is now opened through the death of Jesus

8. How did Jesus' death manage to reverse the fall in Genesis 3?
 - There is a picture of cherubim on the curtain (c.f. Exodus 26:31). The fact that this curtain is torn signifies that the cherubim, which God placed to guard the garden of Eden, is no longer stopping God's people from entering His land.
 - Jesus is the serpent crusher that is mentioned in Genesis 3:15, that he will defeat Satan while taking the damage that is caused by Satan. Jesus' death on the cross has won a victory over all sin.

Read Mark 15:40-47

9. What were the reactions of each of these people towards Jesus' death? How does it assure us that Jesus' death is the fact?

The Centurion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Believed that Jesus is the Son of God when he saw how Jesus died (v39) - Confirmed that Jesus was dead (v45)
The 2 Marys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Followed Jesus until the end - They saw where Jesus' corpse was laid (v47)

Joseph of Arimathea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A council member who was looking for the kingdom of God and had not consented to the council's decision and action (c.f. Luke 23:51) - He dealt with the dead body of Jesus (v43-46)
Pilate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did not believe that Jesus had already died when Joseph first told him (v44) - Confirmed Jesus' death from the centurion (v45)

Application

10. Our sins are the reason that Jesus needed to suffer and die for us. Reflect on your daily life, is there anything you do that you know it's a sin, but you still struggle to fight it? What are the ways that we might deal with it?

11. Is it possible for us to repay this grace that is freely given to us by God? What are the things that we should do after receiving this grace?

12. How can we be supporting and helping each other to live rightly in response to the cross?

Prayer

- *Thank God for giving up His Son to die for our sin, so that the broken relationship between us and God can be rebuilt again.*
- *Pray that we will always be reminded of Jesus' death for us and respond to this grace by putting our trust in it and sharing the gospel with everyone around us.*

Study 27: “The Resurrection Demands a Right Response” (Mark 16:1-8)

Getting started

1. “We can all serve Jesus in our own ways. There is no right or wrong way to serve Jesus, it all depends on the heart”. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

Yes there is! It is because there is a right way to serve/ respond to him. Contrary to the notion that we can serve Jesus any way we want, Jesus demands a specific response. At this stage of the study, we want people to start realising the possibility that there is both a right and wrong way to serve Jesus. We don't have to answer them right now. Let them discover that through the study.

Context

In the previous study, we saw how Jesus was crucified, met His death, and was after that buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

Digging in

Read Mark 16:1-8

2. Identify the main sections and give them a short title

Verses	Title (What you think Mark was saying)
V1-5	The women were prepared and expected to anoint Jesus' body. [Expectation]
V6-7	The expected news of Jesus' resurrection and return to Galilee (Mar 14:28). [Reality]
V8	The women responded with fear and silence rather than to “go, tell...” [Response]

3. What is so significant about the women going to anoint Jesus' body? (cf. Mark 14:3-9)

In ancient times, spices were used to anoint corpses, minimising the miasma from decay and decomposition. This also showed respect and honour toward the deceased. The women's intention here remind us of the unnamed woman who used pure nard oil worth 300 denarii on Jesus in showing him total devotion (Mar 14:3-9). Jesus had interpreted her behaviour as anointing him beforehand for burial. Similarly, these women wanted to still pay their last respects to Jesus who was buried in a hurry on Friday evening (right before Sabbath where work is prohibited). Their actions are a huge contrast to those of the disciples, most of whom have remained absent since they abandoned Jesus (Mark 14:50). Moreover, their intentions to anoint him with spices indicates that they expect to find a decaying body with many scars, wrapped in a linen shroud (Mar 15:46). It also shows that they genuinely loved and cared for Jesus. They were also brave in approaching His tomb which were guarded and the object of Pharisee anger.

4. How does this mysterious young man compare to John the Baptist? (cf. Mark 1). What does it show us?

John the Baptist announced the coming of/ introduced Jesus as the one who is “mightier than him” and this mysterious angelic figure announced the achievement of the King who has conquered death. Both accounts serve as two buns of a huge sandwich i.e. the entire Gospel of Mark. We want others to see the consistency of Mark's writing from a literary perspective and God's faithfulness in accomplishing his work from a theological perspective.

Person	John the Baptist	Unnamed young man
What he looked like	Clothed in camel's hair and wore a leather belt (Mar 1:6).	Dressed in white robe (Mar 16:5)
What he did	Proclaimed repentance to prepare the way of the Lord [Jesus] (Mar 1:2-8)	Announced that Jesus has "gone ahead" of the disciples to Galilee and they are to meet him there. (Mar 14:28).

5. Previously, Jesus forbade people and even demons he interacted with to say anything about him to anyone else (Mark 1:34, 44, 5:43, 8:29-30) Why did the young man command the women to "go, tell..." the disciples something about Jesus? (cf. Mark 9:2-10)

Recap: The Jews' expectation of the Messiah (Christ) is a militant and political figure who will come in great splendor like Superman to save the day i.e. overthrow the Roman government that occupied Jerusalem. For anyone to associate his miracles to the Messiah would only encourage this expectation of a miracle worker who would restore Jewish rule to the Jewish nation. However, Jesus' mission as the Messiah was to die for the sins of the world.

Before Jesus' death and resurrection, no one could have truly understood who He said He is. The spectacular display of Jesus' clothes becoming radiant and intensely white (Mar 9:3) foreshadowed His glory when God would raise Him up as King after dying as the Saviour. While descending from the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus charged them to keep silent about what they saw until He was risen from the dead (Mar 9:9). If the resurrection would help the disciples (namely Peter, James and John) understand the Transfiguration and who Jesus is according to God (Mar 9:7), then these women have all the reason to "go, tell" the disciples that Jesus is risen and that He is indeed the Christ, God's chosen King.

6. What is so significant about meeting Jesus in Galilee? (cf. Mark 14:27-28 and 1:16-20)

Surely, it is already very significant since it shows God's power in raising Jesus to fulfil this promise that "He would go before them (you) to Galilee" (Mar 14:28) just as He had told them (V7). Note that verse 28 is an extension of Jesus quotation of Zechariah 13:7 in verse 27. Borrowing the language from verse 27, He refers to Himself as the shepherd who will be raised up to "go before them" which shows his leadership (like a captain walking ahead of the troop). The juxtaposition between verse 27 and 28 shows that striking the shepherd would cause the sheep (disciples) to scatter and the resurrection (of the shepherd) would cause the sheep to gather. The idea of gathering as supposed to scattering brings us to Galilee. Remember that Jesus first called his disciples in Galilee (Mar 1:16-20); He first made them His sheep there. Meeting the glorified Messiah in Galilee now, the disciples will understand who they really are following; someone who is worth leaving their nets and father for (Mar 1:17, 20).

7. Why do you think that the young man specifically mentioned Peter's name in his announcement to the women? (cf. Mark 14:66-72)

Recap: Peter was the one who claimed twice that he would not betray or deny Jesus even if the others do (Mar 14:29,31). He denied Jesus three times to the extent of invoking a curse on himself (in other words, "let me go to hell if I'm lying") to swear that he did not know Christ (Mar 14:71). Such a sin seems really severe and perhaps we may even think unforgivable.

In the empty tomb, the young man's mention of Peter's name along with the other surviving disciples indicates that Jesus still considers him to be part of His flock. This is a great encouragement as we see the effects of the cross taking effect in Peter's life. God's wrath on humanity for their sin was absorbed by Jesus on the cross and at the same time, His love and mercy was extended to undeserving and sinful creatures who have committed terrible sins like Peter. This should make us reflect on the fact that like Peter, we deny Christ daily every time we rebel (sin) against Him. Yet, God's forgiveness is given to us at the cost of His Son's life on the cross. We ought to be thankful and encouraged to live a life of obedience because like Peter, we are Christ's sheep; we belong to Him and we must live for Him alone. To continue in sin would be to waste away Christ's perfect sacrifice.

8. Does Mark achieve his purpose of writing this gospel account by ending it with verse 8?

Consider the structure of Mark which is a huge sandwich as said in question 4; the meat in the middle is Peter's confession of Jesus as Christ and Jesus' prediction of His death and resurrection (Mar 8:29-31). Those few verses contain Jesus' identity and His mission. It is no coincidence then that the first eight chapters of Mark focus on who Jesus is and His authority as Christ: authority over men (1:16-20, 2:13-14), authority over unclean spirits (1:21-28, 5:6-13) authority to forgive sins (2:4-12), authority over the Sabbath (2:23-3:6), authority over nature (4:35-41), authority to raise the dead (5:35-43), role as the True Shepherd (6:30-34, 8:1-10). Similarly, the next eight chapters focus on what Jesus has come to do while on His way to Jerusalem (11:1-11): predicts his betrayal, death and resurrection (8:31, 9:9, 30-31, 10:33-34, 14:26-28) cleanses/ brings judgment on the Temple (11:12-26) teaches about the Kingdom (10:13-31, 12:1-12, etc), and suffered (14:32-15:39), was buried (16:42-47) and finally raised (16:1-8).

As cheesy and cliché as it sounds, Mark's gospel is all about Jesus; His life, death and resurrection. Based on this structure, we see that it was Jesus' obedience in showing who He is and doing His Father's will. Verse 8 of our passage does not contradict any of that. We may worry that since the women don't tell anyone about Jesus' resurrection, the disciples will not know. Since the ending is so abrupt, we cannot know for certain if their silence was permanent but we do know that their behaviour to take flight from the tomb was an immediate response. We know that Jesus has kept all His promises in the previous chapters, would He not keep His promise to meet His disciples in Galilee "just as He told them". Human weakness as shown in verse 8 will not and did not affect God's faithfulness. Also, does it not give us great hope and encouragement that the gospel was recorded down? The disciples must have certainly found out and John Mark (Mark's full name) recorded it down under Simon Peter's mentorship. One question still remains, why include such a cliffhanger like verse 8 to make it seem so incomplete? Well, it must have really happened and yes, it was not the end of or for the gospel because Christ's resurrection signalled a new beginning - the age to preach the gospel.

9. Wait, so many Bibles show that Mark ends at verse 20. Why stop at verse 8?

Simple answer: "Some of the earliest manuscripts do not include 16:9-20." Being early in terms of historicity meant higher reliability for a document. If these verses were not part of the original manuscripts, they were most probably not written by Mark; it's not Scripture. One of the things that shows a major inconsistency is the fact that verse 9 is a retelling or restarting the entire chapter. Verse 8 has the women running out of the tomb and verse 9 starts with "early on the first day of the week" and only Mary Magdalene is there. Mary the mother of James and Salome have mysteriously disappeared. Verse 10 contradicts verse 8 directly; first they ran away and kept silent and now Mary Magdalene is

telling the disciples that Jesus is risen - which is it? Many scholars have argued that verses 9-20 contains elements from the other gospels which by the way were written a while after Mark (which was the first gospel account written). Moreover, scholars also can tell the vast difference in the writing style of Mark and this potential scribe who provided the extended ending. This clearer in Greek than it is in English.

We can rely on Mark 1:1 - 16:8 being Scripture for its coherency and consistency in delivering a message that presents Jesus as Christ. From here, we see how God's Word interprets itself. Anything that is not consistent with Scripture will stick out like a sore thumb. As such, we can put our faith in Scripture.

Application

10. As Christians today, how should we respond to the death and resurrection of Jesus?

This is where we tie up all the entire study. Are we going to be like the disciples or the women? The disciples promised to endure persecution with Jesus (especially Peter) but ran away when trouble became real at Gethsemane. In slight contrast, the women meant to show their honour and devotion to Jesus by bringing spices to His grave but fled at the sound of His return and remained silent about it because they were afraid. Both groups desired to serve God their way (which is/ may not wrong in itself) but when faced with reality, they run away from serving Him the way He demands to be served. They should be able to see that the correct response according to the text is to "go, tell" people about the Gospel that is Jesus died as our Saviour and rose as our King.

11. Do we mean all that we just said? Are we doing what we just said?

The ideal response is for most people to say no in recognition that we all fail to serve Jesus rightly. Many of shy away in shame from telling others that Jesus died and rose because it sounds fictional. Remember what Jesus said about being ashamed of Him and His Gospel (Mar 8:34-38) - it's really serious. Perhaps some of them have doubts about the reliability of the Gospel. Point them towards questions 8 and 9. Challenge everyone to be evangelistic since as a church, we are meant to be evangelical. As a leader, if you have also failed in preaching the gospel regularly to those around you (as I have), please be honest with the group. They need to see us struggle as well and understand that if this is the best news, we should all proclaim it faithfully. If we do not preach this Gospel but rely solely on showing people our good works, we're just committing the same mistakes as the disciples and the women: serving Jesus the way we want to instead of the way He wants us to. We need to deny ourselves (and our ways of service) to carry our cross and follow Jesus (Mar 8:34). Finally, remind people that Jesus' death has brought forgiveness for our sins (including being ashamed of His gospel) and His resurrection has brought us a living hope (1 Pet 1:3). That should motivate us to preach His gospel.

12. Who should we be preaching this Good News to?

List out names of individuals and people groups. Find out from them what hinders their evangelism from being effective. Maybe they ought to take some TNT courses to learn how to do it effectively or maybe they lack commitment and need to be accountable to another brother or sister. [Text Wrapping Break][Text Wrapping Break]Pray for all these people that have been listed and each other to continue gospel ministry. As Tim N. said on Sunday, "...we are all full-time ministers since we are full-time Christians."

Prayer

Give thanks to God, that you have successfully completed the study and gained a better understanding of the gospel via Mark's perspective. Pray that God will help you to understand more, as you contemplate on your response in light of this gospel.