

The One Year Discipleship Plan: Becoming a Faithful Follower of Jesus

Part 2

Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else, to the nearby villages, so I can preach there also. That is why I have come. Mark 1:38 (NIV)

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Introduction

In the first part of the Discipleship Plan, we did what is called a “Topical” study of the Bible. A topical study takes a subject, or topic of Scripture, and looks at many different verses from many different books to determine what the Bible, as a whole, says about that subject. The previous 28 lessons covered the basic areas of the Christian life from this approach. Now, with this basic foundation established, in part 2, we are going to take a different approach. We are now going to do what is called an “Expository” study of the Bible. An expository approach to Bible study should become our main approach since it takes entire books and passages of Scripture in the context that they were written originally. Each book of the Bible was written at a certain place and at a certain time for a certain reason by a certain person. It has a place in history and reason for being written, that we call the historical context. It is written in different types of literature; such as poetry in places, prophecy in places, stories in places, letters in other places and so on. We call this a literary context, and each type of literature has different rules for interpretation. With topical studies we have to be very careful to not take verses out of their context to make them mean something they were not intended to mean. With expository studies, we are much less likely to take verses out of context since the study of the broader context becomes our starting point.

The Gospel of Mark is a great expository study. It is the story of Jesus’ life and ministry. We call this “narrative” literature because it is written in the form of a story. When studying any book of the Bible, we always want to begin by answering the questions of who wrote it, where or when was it written, if possible, to whom was it written, and most importantly, why it was written. Then, as we study each part or passage, we want to know where Jesus is speaking, to whom is he speaking, what is he saying or doing, all to better help us understand *why* he is saying or doing what he is saying or doing. Expository study of a passage, in its context, is not only a method we use for studying the Bible, it is a skill we want to develop so that these study questions become automatic for us anytime we read the Bible. This expository study of the Gospel of Mark is designed to not only teach you about the life and ministry of Jesus, but also to teach you skills in how to study any part of the Bible from here on. Use the sections titled “Notes” to write any additional thoughts or questions.

When we began this Discipleship Plan, the commitment was not only to be disciplined yourself, but to also prepare to disciple someone else. Have you already begun to fulfill that commitment? If not, are you praying about who you can now begin taking through this plan? Who are you discipling? _____. If you are not, what is keeping you from discipling someone else?

What next needs to happen for you to begin discipling someone else while you are being disciplined yourself?

Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark is considered by many scholars to be likely the first Gospel, or account of Jesus' life, to be written. It is difficult to say with accuracy exactly when Mark wrote this Gospel or where he was when he wrote it. However, writings by early Christians outside of the Bible suggest that Mark wrote originally to Christians in Rome who were suffering persecution under the wicked Emperor Nero. Nero was a power crazed dictator that many historians believe was responsible for setting Rome on fire. He then blamed the Christians for the fire that destroyed most of the city. Following that, he put many of them to death, most notably Peter and Paul. Mark's Gospel was likely an attempt to encourage the Christians there to faithfulness in the midst of persecution. Like all of the New Testament, Mark was written originally in the Greek language. The content of the Gospel seems to point toward a more Gentile audience than a Jewish audience, which is what the church in Rome was at the time. Even though Mark was not an actual disciple of Jesus as one of the twelve, it is believed that Peter was his source of material. 1 Peter 5:13 indicates the close relationship between Peter and Mark and places them together at Babylon, which was another term for Rome. This would likely have been between 60-68 AD, during the terrible reign of Nero. The first 10 chapters of Mark are devoted to the three-year public ministry and teaching of Jesus, while the last 6 are devoted to Jesus' final week and resurrection. This tells us how much importance Mark placed on the end of Jesus' ministry and his sacrifice for sin and resurrection. The Gospel begins with the early stages of Jesus' ministry and covers about a three-year, period until his ascension into heaven.

Since all four Gospels; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were all written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we have four different accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus. Even when there are differences among the four Gospels, we can see these accounts as different witnesses to the same events. Mark's Gospel is the shortest in length of the four and provides the most concise account of Jesus' life and teaching.

Important Terms:

There are several very important words that come up again and again in Mark's Gospel that must be understood in order to better understand the book:

Repent – Greek word: metanoia. Metanoia has at its core a change of mind with regard to sin but is more used for how I'm willing to live. It is an obedient response to Jesus (Matt. 12:41) and a call to discipleship. As an example, If I am walking down a road going one direction, to repent means that I turn around and walk the opposite direction. If I am living my life in disobedience to God and against his will for me, to repent means that I am willing to stop living that way and instead submit to God's will and begin living in obedience to him.

Faith – Greek word: pistis (noun) pisteuo (verb). Pistis is not merely an intellectual agreement about God but instead a wholehearted trust, reliance and dependence on God. Faith is exercised from the heart more than the mind. It is like a muscle. The more it is exercised, the stronger it becomes.

Kingdom – Greek word: basilea. Basilea is the rule or reign of a king. It is both a present reality in submitting to the authority of Jesus, but a coming future reality that will be realized fully with Jesus' return. To enter the kingdom is to submit to the rule of Jesus in a person's life. We do that by repentance and faith. That is how we enter God's kingdom. It is the message Jesus preached in calling people to repent and believe the good news.

Gospel – Greek word: euangelion (noun) euangelizo (verb). Gospel means "good news," either the news itself or the proclamation of good news in the verb form. In Jesus' ministry it was the good news that a person could be forgiven of their sin by repenting and believing that Jesus was the Messiah. Later in the New Testament, it came to include belief in Jesus rising from the dead.

Baptism – Greek word: baptizo. It means to dip or immerse. John was immersing people who repented, in the Jordan river, to symbolize their cleansing from sin since they were now forgiven. Baptism in water symbolizes forgiveness and cleansing from sin. However, according to verse 7, his message was also that one was coming after him who would baptize with the Holy Spirit. In other words, there was a time coming when those who repented and trusted in Jesus for salvation would also receive the Holy Spirit along with forgiveness of their sins.

Keep these definitions in mind as you go through your study.

Read the entire Gospel of Mark from start to finish. Take as long as you need to read the entire book. However, the more quickly you read through the book, the more you will be able to see an overview of it. This is the first step in studying a book of the Bible. It helps us to see the bigger picture of the entire book before we begin examining the details of each part. Then, as you read, write out anything that you find notable and any questions that you have.

Notes:

Lesson 30

Mark 1:1-8

Read verses :1-8 of chapter 1 concerning John the Baptizer and note everything you learn about him from these verses:

Are you sure you have not missed anything about him? Look again:

Why do you think Mark begins the gospel about Jesus Christ with a description of the life and ministry of John? Consider Isaiah 40:3 in your answer.

Describe in your own words what you think a “baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” means:

Summary: Approximately 650 years before John and Jesus were born, the prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of John as a messenger to prepare the way for the Lord. His message, according to verse 4, was a message of repentance that enabled one to be forgiven, followed by a baptism to symbolize the cleansing from sin that resulted from the repentance.

Application: Have you repented of your sin and been baptized? If not, what is keeping you from doing these things?

Mark 1:9-12

What is the difference between Jesus’ baptism and everyone else that John baptized?

If Jesus had no sin to repent of, why did John baptize him?

Why did the Holy Spirit immediately send Jesus into the desert and what happened there?

Summary: Jesus was not baptized because he had repented of sin. He was the sinless Son of God. He had no sin. His baptism was instead a public declaration of him being God's Son and that the Holy Spirit was upon. Just as baptism publicly showed repentance and forgiveness for everyone else, Jesus' baptism was the public occasion for the Father to recognize Jesus as his beloved Son and for everyone to see the Holy Spirit had come upon him. Having been identified as the Son of God publicly, Jesus immediately went into the desert for forty days to prepare for his public ministry.

Mark 1:14-20

If you could choose between John the Baptizer of Jesus to be your pastor, which would you choose and why?

What is the same and what is different in the preaching of Jesus and John from verses 4 and verses 14-15?

Why do you think that the disciples were so anxious to leave everything and follow Jesus?

What promise did Jesus make to them?

What does it mean to become a fisher of men?

Summary: It is so important to see Jesus preaching the same message of repentance that John preached. Jesus then added a call to believe the good news. The word "gospel" means good news. Jesus was calling people to repent and believe the Gospel. What was that good news? The news that a person could be forgiven of their sin by repenting and believing that the kingdom of God was near. It was believing that Jesus was the Messiah. Clearly the fishermen recognized this or they would not have been willing to leave everything to follow Jesus. Jesus promised to make them fishers of men, meaning they would also begin preaching the Gospel and calling people to repent.

Application: Are you prepared to leave everything to follow Jesus? Are you willing to walk away from anything in your life that the Lord wants you to leave? Can you be disciple of Jesus without this kind of commitment to him?

Lesson 31

Mark 1:21-29

Read about this day in the life of Jesus, from start to finish, and decide what must have been so difficult about it. What do you think were the greatest challenges? Was it casting out the demon, healing Peter's mother-in-law, or the crowds that came after sundown?

Why would Jesus not let the demon speak?

What was so mazing to the people?

Why did everyone come after sunset?

Summary: Jesus began the day in the synagogue, the Jewish house of worship, and while speaking a demon began shouting to Jesus. He was calling him the "Holy One of God," which Jesus wasn't yet ready for people to know publicly. So, he silenced the demon and cast it out. Then, he healed more people, include Peter's mother-in-law. The rest of the people came after sundown because the Sabbath, the day of rest, was now over and they could move about freely. Once again, he silenced the demons so they wouldn't reveal to the crowds who he was until he was ready. We will see why in the next section.

Mark 1:35-39

What surprises you about what Jesus did after such a long day of ministry? What does this tell us about the value of prayer?

What surprises you about Jesus' response to his disciples when they found him?

What does this tell us about the priority Jesus had in ministry? Was it healing people or preaching the good news?

Summary: Verse 38 is one of the most important verses in the New Testament because it tells us what Jesus had as his priority in ministry: it was preaching above healings and miracles. Why? Of all the people Jesus healed, how many of them eventually died? Correct; all of them! Was the healing, then, temporary or permanent? Correct again; temporary! Of all the people who responded to the Gospel with faith and repentance and were saved, was their forgiveness temporary or permanent? Correct, It was permanent! That's why Jesus was more concerned about the spiritual needs of people than their physical needs. Salvation that results from preaching the good news is eternal, while all the miracles and healing are temporary.

Application: What can we learn from that priority in Jesus' ministry? How might it effect our prayer life? How might it effect our conversations with people?

Notes:

Lesson 32

Mark 1:40-45

What impresses you about Jesus' response to the leper?

Why did Jesus command him to tell no one, but instead go to the priest?

Summary: Jesus did not want a reputation as merely a healer or for the crowds to be distracted with the idea that he was the Messiah. They expected the Messiah to be a new king, a political savior, and had been waiting for one for centuries. They expected him to overthrow the Roman government and restore power to Israel. That was NOT why Jesus came, and therefore why he kept the demons from revealing who he was. Neither did he want to be known primarily as a healer. Instead, Jesus proves in this chapter that he came to be the Savior from sin and that was the focus of his ministry. The greatest needs of people are always spiritual and Jesus is therefore the answer to our greatest needs. That is why it is so important to preach the good news, the Gospel, because that is how people experience eternal life when they repent and believe.

Mark 2:1-12

What impresses you about the man that was paralyzed? What impresses you about his friends? How much faith did they all demonstrate?

Why did Jesus tell the man that his sins were forgiven at first, rather than tell him to get up and walk? Look carefully at verses 10-11.

Who does have authority to forgive sins except God? Who was Jesus declaring himself to be?

Summary: This was not just the healing of a man that was paralyzed, it was a statement that Jesus had the authority to forgive sin. Since only God can forgive sin, Jesus was declaring himself to be God. The Jewish teachers accused him of blasphemy, but if he was God, he was not blaspheming. In chapter 1 we see casting out demons and healing people. More importantly, he was preaching the good news and calling people to repent and believe the good news. Now in chapter 2 we see him now declaring himself to be God by forgiving sin.

Application: Are you prepared to give Jesus full authority over your life: Which parts of your life are you refusing to bring under obedience to Jesus? That tells us where we are refusing to give him authority. List all of the areas of your life right now that you have not given over to Jesus to control:

Notes:

Lesson 33

Mark 2:13-17

Tax collectors were some of the most disliked people of the day because they made a living by over taxing people. Many of them became very wealthy as a result. Why would Jesus call someone like that to follow him? Look carefully at verse 17.

Why were the Pharisees so critical of Jesus for eating with Levi and the other tax collectors?

What did Jesus mean about not coming to call the righteous but sinners?

Summary: The religious people of the day, the Pharisees, had nothing to do with people like Levi. They considered them to be unclean sinners. They considered themselves to be righteous. That is why they were so critical of Jesus for eating with sinners. In their mind, righteous people didn't associate with sinners. Jesus changed that completely. He came to save sinners. The righteous people didn't think they needed a savior because they were trusting in their righteous works. We learn from this that self-righteousness, like that of the Pharisees, keeps us from Jesus.

Mark 2:18-3:6

What is the connection between Jesus and his disciples not fasting and new wine in old wineskins? What is so confusing about this?

What does that have to do with picking and eating grain on the Sabbath?

What was the problem with Jesus healing a man on the Sabbath?

Why were the Jewish leaders so critical of Jesus' actions in these cases and why did they want to kill him?

Summary: Jesus makes it clear that it is a time of celebration for his disciples since he is with them, not a time for fasting. The Pharisees are judging Jesus in all of these situations on how he is keeping the Law of Moses as they define it. However, Jesus is not there to meet their expectations. He is doing something new and different with the coming of the kingdom, and people only focused on keeping the Law of Moses are not accepting of him. He is putting the needs of people, like the man with the shriveled hand, above traditions. The chapter begins with Jesus doing something unexpected and continues throughout. The kingdom that he is preaching does not fit the traditions of the Pharisees. It is something totally new. It is new wine n old wineskins or new cloth on an old coat. The new does not fit with the old. It is so offensive to the Jewish leaders that they are ready to kill him.

Application: What old things from your past need to be removed from your life? What expectations do you have for the Lord? What is your reaction when he does not meet your expectations?

Notes:

Lesson 34

Mark 3:7-19

What impresses you most about this summary of Jesus' ministry? Look at a map and identify all of the areas that people came from to see Jesus.

What was the mission that Jesus intended for his disciples?

Summary: People came from several regions to see Jesus as news about him spread. From those following him he designated twelve of them to be "apostles," which means "to send" since Jesus was sending them to preach and cast out demons as he had been doing.

Mark 3:20-34

What were the Pharisees saying about Jesus' power to do miracles?

What was Jesus' family concerned about?

Who does Jesus say are those that are closest to him?

Summary: Jesus had the Holy Spirit descend upon him at his baptism, but the Pharisees were saying that it was an evil spirit within him. That is why he said they were blaspheming the Holy Spirit; they were calling the Holy Spirit a demon. Even Jesus' family was concerned that he had gone crazy and came to rescue him. But just made it clear that those closest to him are the ones that obey him, not his own family members. We learn from this how important it is to obey Jesus in order to remain close to him.

Application: What do you most need to do now to obey Jesus?

Notes:

Lesson 35

Mark 4:1-20

Why does Jesus begin to use parables to teach people? (Look carefully at verses 10-12)

In this parable, identify what each of these represents:

Seed refers to ...?

Sower refers to ...?

Path refers to ...?

Rocky places refer to ...?

Thorns refers to ...?

What do you think is the main point of this parable?

Remember, this parable is about the kingdom of God, so what does it teach us about how things work in God's kingdom?

Summary: Jesus began teaching in parables because, depending on the spiritual condition of the listener, a parable either revealed truth or kept truth from them. For those with ears to hear, those who were spiritually seeking truth, parables were like a picture story that revealed spiritual truth. But many in the crowds were not there really seeking truth. Some were there to criticize, like the Pharisees, while others were there to be entertained by the miracles. For those people, Jesus' truth in the parable was not understood. However, this is a great lesson Jesus is teaching about the fact the different people react differently to hearing the Gospel. Some people respond well at first, but either Satan deceives them into disbelieving it or they find the way of faith in Jesus difficult and give up. Other people still, become excited about the good news at first, but they don't make it a priority in their lives and it never produces fruit or changes them. Finally, there are those with ears to hear, who accept the good news and it produces great blessing in their lives.

Application: Have you responded to the Gospel and made it the priority in your life? What kind of growth and change is happening in your life because of the Gospel?

Mark 4:21-34

What does this parable about the lamp have to do with the kingdom and the parable of the Sower?

What does the parable of the growing seed teach us about the kingdom?

What is the parable of the mustard seed about?

Summary: Each of these parables, except the one about the lamp, have to do with growing something. Here Jesus adds some things about God's kingdom in addition to what he has already said in the parable of the Sower. Responding to the good news of salvation by repenting and believing the good news will result in change in that person. You may not understand how the change is happening, but God is causing the growth. That's the parable of the growing seed. Likewise, even though there may be few people at first that are willing to respond well to the Gospel, God will cause his kingdom to grow to great size. That's the parable of the mustard seed. But we must make God's kingdom our priority. What we put in to our growth in faith will be in proportion to the blessing it is to us, and the more we put toward seeking God's kingdom, the more growth and blessing will happen in our lives. That is what the parable of the lamp is about. We must make our relationship with God our top priority, otherwise we will lose the growth we have already gained. With spiritual growth in God's kingdom, we are either moving ahead or losing what we have gained according to how much we are seeking God.

Application: What is the most important thing in your life right now? What must become the most important thing for you? What do you most need to change in your life for that to happen?

Lesson 36

Mark 4:35-41

Why do you think that the disciples woke Jesus up when he was sleeping? Was it so that he would save them from the storm?

If they awakened him to save them, they would be showing faith. What does Jesus say about their faith in verse 40?

What does Jesus say is the opposite of faith in verse 40?

Were the disciples more afraid of Jesus or the storm? (Look carefully at verse 41)

Summary: The Sea of Galilee was known for terrible weather because the cool air coming down from the hills would meet the warm air of the water, much lower, and cause great storms. Jesus was sleeping in one of these storms, which was so bad the disciples thought they were going to die. They woke Jesus up because the situation was so severe, not because they thought he would save them. They didn't expect him to do what he did. That is why they were more afraid of Jesus after the storm than they were of the storm itself. That is why Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith. They have never seen this kind of power. All they had seen him do was heal the sick and cast out demons. Calming the storm was something far more amazing to them. They didn't believe Jesus had this kind of power and that is why fear was controlling them. Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith because they didn't believe he could do something like this. Jesus, teaches us, therefore, that he has power over all of his Creation and that faith in him will eliminate fear of circumstances. But when fear is in control, we know that faith is lacking.

Application: What are you most afraid of in your life? Which is greater; Jesus or the thing that you are most afraid of? Is there anything in your life that is too powerful for Jesus?

Mark 5:1-20

What does Mark tell us about the condition of this man living among the tombs of dead people?

What is the reason for his condition?

What is different about the way Jesus lets this demon speak?

How did it effect the people of this area to lose all of these pigs?

After Jesus healed this man, what did he tell him to do?

Summary: This area across the Sea of Galilee was a Gentile area. We see that from the large herd of pigs. In Jewish areas, Jesus refused to allow the demons to speak because he didn't want his identity revealed yet. In a Gentile area, they weren't expecting the Messiah. It didn't matter what they said there. Also, when Jesus healed in Jewish regions, he often told them not to tell anyone. He didn't want people to come for physical healing more than the spiritual truth. Here, he tells this man to go tell people what Jesus has done for him. Did this man know the Scriptures? Had he been a follower of Jesus for years? No, none of these. Yet, Jesus told him to go tell people what had happened to him. We need to tell people what Jesus has done for us, even if they have questions we can't answer. We don't need to know everything about Jesus or the Bible to tell people about his work in our lives.

Application: What is keeping you from telling people what Jesus has done for you?

Lesson 37

Mark 5:21-43

Where is Jesus now; is he still in the Gentile area or back in the Jewish area and what difference does it make?

What is different about these healings from the ones we have seen so far in the Gospel of Mark?

What is similar and different about the fear of the synagogue leader in verse 36 and the fear of the disciples in the storm?

What is the same with the woman healed of bleeding and the disciples in the storm AFTER Jesus did the miracle/

In both situations, the people involved had _____ that Jesus was able to meet their need.

Summary: Just after the storm where Jesus' disciples didn't expect him to save them, both the synagogue leader and the woman came to Jesus for a miracle. They believed he could do something even though they were suffering in their circumstances. In both cases, Jesus did not disappoint them but met their need.

Application: What do you need to face in your life right now with faith in the power of God rather than fear?

Notes:

Lesson 38

Mark 6:1-6

What are the most important issues in how people received Jesus in his hometown?

When people rejected him as the Messiah and saw him only as a man, how did it effect Jesus' ministry to them?

Mark 6:7-13

Why did Jesus place all of these restrictions on his disciples before he sent them out?

How effective were the disciples in fulfilling the mission?

What was connection between preaching repentance and healing people of physical and spiritual issues?

Summary: In Jesus' hometown he was viewed as simply the carpenter or the son of the carpenter, not the Messiah. Therefore, they were not able to receive the ministry Jesus' may have been able to provide. They didn't believe in who he was. On the other hand, the disciples had very effect ministry under Jesus' authority in sending them. They were calling people to repent, just a Jesus did, as well as healing them and casting out demons.

Mark 6:14-29

Why was there such confusion about who Jesus was even beyond his hometown?

How do we understand God allowing this to happen to his servant John? Compare with John 3:27-30 for your answer.

What price did John have to pay in remaining faithful to God's truth rather than compromising for the sake of a king?

Summary: Just as we saw at the beginning of the chapter, there was much confusion about who Jesus was and how to respond to him. Herod wasn't sure either after he had put John to death. We understand that John had fulfilled his mission of announcing the Messiah. Even John said he must increase and I must decrease. It was his time to go to the Lord, but he remained faithful to the end, even though his faithfulness would cost him his life.

Application: What price are you willing to pay to remain faithful to Jesus? Are you experiencing persecution now for remaining faithful to Jesus? If we are not experiencing any opposition because of our faith in Jesus, what might that tell us about how faithfully we are living?

Notes:

Lesson 39

Mark 6:30-56

What was Jesus' priority for the disciples after the ministry trip? What does that tell us about having a balance of rest and activity when it comes to ministry?

What surprises you about the way the disciples want to feed the people after just having done miracles on their trip?

How is this similar to Jesus calming the storm? Is it similar or different from what Jesus has done before?

What does Jesus do himself after this ministry activity of feeding all of these people?

What surprises you about the reaction of the disciples to Jesus walking on the water?

Summarize Jesus' miracles in this chapter and write out all that you learn about him from them?

Summary: Jesus clearly teaches a balance between ministry activity and rest. Not only does he teach it, but he practices it himself. But the focus again is on Jesus doing miracles beyond what the disciples have seen before. As a result, they doubt in circumstances or fear others, rather than trusting in the power of Jesus. Just because we have not seen God do something doesn't mean our faith should be limited.

Application: What are you learning about the need to rest from ministering to people at times? What are you learning about putting limitations on what Jesus can do, yourself?

Notes:

Lesson 40

Mark 7:1-23

In verse 6, how gentle was Jesus with the religious leaders who put their religious traditions above the commandments of God?

How did they use their traditions to avoid obedience to God's commands in verses 9-13?

Summarize what Jesus is teaching about where sin comes from and how that is different from what the religious leaders were teaching:

Mark 7:24-37

What is different about this woman in verses 24-30 and how does that effect the miracle she receives?

How is the deaf, mute man also different from others Jesus healed and what was different about his healing?

Summary: The Pharisees, the religious leaders, were far more concerned about washing their hands before eating than they were about keeping God's commands to take care of their parents. Instead, they found a way around that by using their traditions. By calling their possessions "Corban", they could still use them for themselves, rather than taking care of their parents, but still say they were dedicated to God. That is why Jesus calls them hypocrites. That sin is the sin of greed, and comes from within a person. That is what really makes us unclean. Not eating with unwashed hands.

The woman that Jesus healed and most likely the man that was deaf were Gentile. Jesus healed her daughter without even being there. Both the woman and the man showed great faith in coming to Jesus for healing, even though they were not Jewish. Much more faith than in some Jewish areas like his hometown.

Application: How do these stories challenge you to trust Jesus more with the pressures and struggles in your own life? Can you identify some of those problems now that you need to trust Jesus with more than you are?

Notes:

Lesson 41

Mark 8:1-26

Detail the differences in this feeding of the multitude from the one that occurred chapter 6:

What did Jesus mean by his warning to watch out for the “...yeast of the Pharisees and Herod?”

What is still lacking in the faith of the disciples, and how is that similar to our faith at times?

Compare the healing of the blind man here with the deaf man in chapter 7 and note the similarities and differences:

Summary: Jesus clearly performed another miracle of feeding another large crowd of people. However, his disciples are worried about where they can get bread. Jesus rebukes them for their lack of understanding and faith. Yeast is what is unseen in bread, but its effect is to cause it to rise. In the same way, Jesus is warning his disciples to watch out for the negative effect of the Pharisees and Herod. Both of them were opposed to Jesus and the Gospel.

Application: Think about the way you pray and trust the Lord. Do you put limitations on him? Are your prayers too small because you lack faith to pray for miracles? Do you believe Jesus is still a miracle working God? If so, how do you show it? What evidence can you offer for this kind of faith?

Notes:

Lesson 42

Mark 8:27-38

Locate Caesarea Philippi on your map and note its location. It marks Jesus' turning for Jerusalem for the last time and him being more direct with his disciples about what is going to happen there.

Why do you think that there is still so much confusion about who Jesus is after all this time?

Does Jesus care more about what the crowds are believing about him or what his disciples are believing about him? Are they correct?

Why is there such a strong rebuke of Peter when he tells Jesus that he cannot die?

Stop your study for the moment and consider whether there are things in your life that you are putting above the Lord's will for you? What is there currently that you are making a higher priority for yourself than the what the Lord most wants you to become focused on. What things of man do you have more in mind than the things of the Lord? Commit this to prayer and ask the Lord to make these areas clear to you if they are not already.

Look at verses 34-9:1 again and write out the connection between them and what just occurred with Peter here in verse 33:

Was Peter denying himself and taking up his cross to follow Jesus or was Peter insisting on Jesus doing what Peter wanted him to do? What about you? Are you willing to deny yourself and put the plans God has for you above your own?

Summary: This is a very decisive section concerning what the future holds for Jesus and his telling his disciples about it. Of course, they don't want to hear anything about him dying. How could he possibly become their new king if he dies? Peter is actually bold enough to insist that Jesus give up this idea of dying and rising from the dead, which is exactly the plan the Father has for Jesus. Therefore, Peter was putting his own plans above the will of God. He was not willing to deny himself and die to his own will. Instead, he was trying to convince Jesus to do Peter's will.

Application: Think about your own prayer life and whether you do the same thing at times. Do you actually pray in such a way that you are trying to convince God to do what you want done, or are you instead in submission to whatever God's will is for you, regardless of whether you like it or not?

Mark 9:2-12

Imagine being Peter, James or John while Jesus was changing in appearance right before their eyes. What would you have been thinking?

Moses and Elijah were two of the most prominent leaders of God's people in the Old Testament. What do you think was the significance of them being there with Jesus?

Look carefully at verse 7 and note what were Peter, James and John were supposed to receive from this experience?

Read Malachi 4:5-6 for an idea of why the Jews were expecting Elijah to come. Who does Luke 1:17 identify as the one who fulfills this prophecy?

Summary: Jesus took his three closest disciples to the mountain where this meeting occurred between himself, Moses, Elijah and God the Father. The text does not say here what they discussed but the ordeal was terrifying to the disciples. The Father reminded the disciples that Jesus was his Son and that they should listen to him. That was the message for them. In asking about Elijah, Jesus informed them that the prophecy had already been fulfilled, which was through John the Baptist. He came before Jesus and by this time, he had been put to death by Herod.

Application: How do you react to this presentation of Jesus as greater than Moses and Elijah, since they were God's servants but Jesus is his Son? What difference should that make in our worship of Jesus?

Mark 9:14-32

Look carefully at verse 19 and note Jesus' frustration. Is he frustrated with the people, his disciples, or both, and what are they lacking that is so disappointing to Jesus? (Verse 23 is a clear indicator)

How do you identify with the father in verse 24? Do you struggle at times with the same problem?

What do you think Jesus means in verse 29 about “this kind only coming out by prayer?”

Why do you think the disciples are still struggling so much with understanding God’s plan for Jesus dying and rising again?

Summary: Jesus here seems very frustrated with the lack of faith of this whole generation of people toward the Messiah, but especially with his disciples. Apparently, they didn’t think about expressing faith through prayer to cast out this demon, but were likely resting on their own strength. The father of the boy, on the other hand, does have faith but is struggling with too little faith. He believes, but also struggles with unbelief. Meanwhile, the disciples are still unable to understand that the Messiah is going to die and rise again. This does not fit their idea for him and therefore they can’t receive it.

Application: Consider your own level of trust in the Lord. How would you rate it? Is it high, medium, or low? Do you trust him but also struggle with not trusting him at times? Are you willing to take this to the Lord in prayer and ask him to work within you so that your faith is increased?

Notes:

Lesson 43

Mark 9:33-50

This section of chapter 9 contains several separate, but related events and ideas. Read the entire section and see what conclusions you can draw about how they relate to one another.

Why do you think the disciples would be discussing which of them is the greatest after the failure with the demon?

What is the connection between the child and being a servant of the Lord?

What is the motivation behind the disciples trying to stop a man from driving out demons?

How seriously should we take allowing sin in our lives, and what should we do to deal with it?

Summary: After failing to cast out a demon, the disciples, amazingly, enter into a discussion about who is the greatest among them, which is an example of pride. Using a child as an example, Jesus teaches them about humility, which is the opposite. He also rebukes them for trying to stop someone from doing ministry because the man was not one of them. This is also an indication of pride. Jesus then teaches them about the seriousness of sin and how seriously they must treat it. He is not calling them to actually pluck out eyes and cut off hands since these would not stop their sinning anyway. Instead, this is a figure of speech about dealing seriously with sin in our lives. This requires humility, but purifies us when we deal with it. It also enables us to be at peace with others than in conflict due to pride. All of these incidents are connected around the themes of pride, humility, sin and repentance.

Application: Consider this passage and your own struggles with pride and the need for humility. What do you need to deal with in this area, and what other areas of sin in your life do you need to seriously address that you may have been tolerating or ignoring?

Notes:

Lesson 44

Mark 10:1-12

Jesus was confronted with the Pharisees wanting him to settle a debate between two Jewish positions on divorce. One group was very strict and allowing almost no reason for divorce. The other was very liberal and allowed many. Which of the two positions does Jesus seem to decide in favor of?

What do we learn here about God's plan for marriage?

Summary: This section in Mark's Gospel does not include the reason of adultery for divorce that we find in Matthew. Nevertheless, we see Jesus taking a very strict approach to divorce and affirming that God's plan for marriage is one man and one woman for life. This is not a complete teaching on the whole subject of divorce and remarriage, but it sets the basic principles.

Mark 10:13-31

Read the entire passage of verse :13-31. It may seem disconnected but Mark has a common theme running through both of them; the theme of what is necessary to enter heaven? This section answers the question from different perspectives.

What quality of a child is necessary for entering heaven?

What quality is the wealthy man lacking for entering heaven?

Why were the disciples amazed at what Jesus said to him?

What promise does Jesus offer to those who are willing to leave everything to follow him?

Summary: Jesus here again uses a child, as in chapter 9, as an example of humility and trust. Children were not exalted in that culture and often viewed as unimportant. Likely that is why the disciples were trying to keep them away. Jesus will not allow that and affirms their

importance to him, but stresses that childlike humility and faith are necessary to enter heaven. The rich young man is trusting his obedience to the Law to get him into heaven. Jesus has bad news for him. He learns that he must be willing to surrender everything to the Lord to enter heaven. Which is something he was not willing to do. In Jewish culture, wealth was a sign of God's blessing. That is why the disciples were so shocked at Jesus' conversation with the wealthy man. On the other hand, Jesus promises great blessing, both here and in eternity, for those who are willing to humbly submit to Jesus in every area and express childlike faith in him.

Application: What in your life is keeping you from a full and complete surrender to the Lord? Are there things that you are unwilling to give up that are more important to you than following Jesus? Do you need to confess that to Jesus now and ask him for strength to remove these things from your life?

Mark 10:32-34

Why were the disciples so amazed that Jesus would go to Jerusalem and the people following in the crowd so afraid?

Do you think Jesus' answer gave them any comfort?

Summary: Jesus was walking into the fire in going to Jerusalem since all of his opposition was centered there. That is why his disciples were amazed he would do that. However, Jesus informs them that it is worse than they thought. He is actually going to die there but rise again. He is telling them yet again about this event that is coming, yet they don't understand what it is all about.

Mark 10:35-45

What is so amazing about the request of James and John and how do the other disciples react to it?

What must one do to become great in the Kingdom of God?

Why is this so difficult?

What example did Jesus set for us as a servant?

Summary: In this event James and John ask for the highest places of authority in Jesus' kingdom. They see greatness as the world of their day saw greatness; the higher the position, the greater the person. The more people you are over, the greater you must be. Jesus turns that thinking completely upside down and teaches them the greatest person in his kingdom is the one that serves the most people. Jesus himself was the example of this by giving his life for the sins of the many.

Application: How do you see people around you? Do you relate to by what they can do for you, or do you relate to them by what you can do for them? Do you see people are there to serve you or there to be served by you? Being great in Jesus' kingdom depends on how you answer those questions.

Mark 10:46-52

What is the difference and what are the similarities between this healing and others we have seen before?

Why do you think Mark included this healing here in the Gospel? Note on your map where Jericho is located.

Summary: This the last account of Jesus' activity before entering Jerusalem for his final week. Jericho is close by and this happened on the way there. Like other accounts, this is a Jewish man that believed Jesus could heal, which is exactly what Jesus did. This even marks the turning point in Mark's Gospel. From here we will follow Jesus in his final week in the city.

Application: What are you believing God for that will require a miracle for it to happen?

Notes:

Lesson 45

Mark 11:1-11

What surprises you most about what happens in Bethpage?

Read Zechariah 9:9 and decide what is the significance of the unriden colt?

When the crowd shouts “Hosanna” again and again, which means “Save” or “Save us,” which salvation do you think they are asking about?

Summary: This even is known as the Triumphal Entry. In ancient times a king or ruler would be welcomed into a city much like this, only they would be mounted on a horse. Zechariah tells us that Jesus’ choice reflects his humility. The crowd, meanwhile, wants to welcome him as king, but they see him as a political king. They want him to save them from Roman occupation. They are not looking for a savior from their sin, they want a savior from their oppression. In Luke’s account he mentions that Jesus then wept over the city for not recognizing the time was upon them for salvation from their sin.

Application: What do you want God to rescue you from that has nothing to do with your salvation? Do you often seek God to address your physical needs more than your spiritual needs? Are you more concerned with being happy or being holy? These are the kinds of questions that help us determine whether we are focused more on physical things, relationships, freedoms, etc. than on growing in obedience to Christ. Not that physical things don’t matter to the Lord, we just need to realize that our spiritual growth matters more.

Mark 11:12-14; 20-25

At this time of the year, fig trees would have leaves but no ripe figs yet. Obviously then, this story about the fig tree is a lesson about something else? What do you think this might actually be about? Consider what it has to do with the cleansing of the Temple.

Mark 11:15-19

What do you think of this expression of anger on behalf of Jesus? Do you think he was justified in his actions? Why?

Summary: The cursing of the fig tree is actually related to cleansing of the Temple. Since people were expected to make a sacrifice, they often had their own animals rejected as imperfect and were forced to buy others at much higher prices. They also had to change their Roman coins into acceptable money to pay their Temple tax. This was also done for a very high price. What was happening at the Temple, which was supposed to be the worship of God, was actually a scam to make money. In a similar way, the fig tree appeared to be a fruitful tree, but was in fact barren and offered nothing to anyone. The same thing was happening with the worship going on at the Temple. It appeared very religious, but was empty of anything that was useful to the worshippers. Just as the tree was judged and cursed, so would be the religious leaders of Israel. Real worship involves real faith in the Lord.

Application: How would you describe your worship of the Lord? Is it sincere and honest or do you just go through the motions? Once again, what are you believing the Lord for that will require a miracle to bring about?

Mark 11:27-33

What impresses you most about how Jesus handles his opposition?

What do you think the Jewish leadership was looking for in asking Jesus about his authority? Were they really interested in knowing or were they more looking for something to use against him?

Application: What can we learn from Jesus in this situation?

Lesson 46

Mark 12:1-12

In this parable, let's break down who each group represents:

The Vineyard Owner represents

The farmers

The servants of the Owner

The Owner's son

What is the main idea of this parable?

What does the reaction of the Jewish leaders tell us about how they understood the parable?

Summary: This is a classic parable about God sending prophet after prophet to the Jewish people, only to have them reject the prophets. Finally, he sent his son, but they killed him. As a result, they were executed and the vineyard given to others. In this case, Jesus is clearly teaching about his coming death at the hands of the Jewish leaders, who have rejected him and will suffer judgment for it. The Jewish leaders knew it was directed at them and therefore were anxious to get rid of him.

Application: When it comes to parables, we do not try to define every element with its representative. We instead look at the main parts in order to get the main idea. However, the audience that Jesus is speaking to when he uses a parable is a real clue to what he intends for a meaning. This was for the opposition to Jesus, so he is telling them what the future holds for them given their rejection and killing of him that is yet to happen.

Mark 12:13-17

What is similar and what is different in this encounter with Jesus' opposition compared to the last encounter that we just looked at?

What was the real motive of those questioning Jesus?

What do we learn from this encounter?

Summary: Once again, Jesus faces his opposition but this time they are setting a trap. If he says they should pay their taxes, the crown will not like his answer. If he says they should not pay their taxes, they can turn him in to the Romans. It seems like a trap, but Jesus answers in such a way that leaves them speechless. He avoids the trap by teaching they should pay taxes, but what is owed to God is even greater.

Application: What do you owe to government and what do you owe to God? Which get most from you? Do you pay more in taxes than you give to the Lord? If the answer is yes, what problem do you see with that?

Mark 12:18-27

Once again, what similarities and differences do you see in this encounter with Jesus' opposition from the two previous ones?

The Sadducees were a group of usually wealthy, powerful individuals that used Scripture alone for their beliefs, especially the first five books of the Bible. Since they found no evidence for a resurrection there in the Old Testament, they didn't believe in it. However, is their understanding of the Old Testament, correct?

Summary: Jesus corrects the Sadducees on two points, the resurrection and the power of God. They doubted both. We learn along the way that there will be no marriage in heaven, but there will definitely be resurrection by the power of God. Jesus is again speaking of his future as he speaks about a resurrection, in addition to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

Application: How you think it would affect your life if you did not believe in Jesus' resurrection or your own?

Lesson 47

Mark 12:28-34

What is the difference between this encounter between Jesus and his opponents and the previous ones we have looked at?

How do you think this greatest commandment to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength, applies to you?

How would you judge yourself as to how well you are loving other people as you love yourself?

Why is it more important to love God this way than to love people as yourself? Why is the first commandment the greatest and the second one placed second?

What does Jesus mean that the man asking the question is “not far” from the kingdom of God?

Summary: In this encounter, Jesus seems to be asked a sincere question rather than one that is intended to be a trap. Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4-5 making it our highest priority to love God with all that we are and all that we have. As we love God with total submission of all we are and have, we follow that by loving our neighbors by caring for them the way we take care of ourselves. By answering in agreement with Jesus, this man indicates that he understands what is really important in a relationship with God. As a result, he is definitely not as far away as the others who were opposing Jesus.

Application: Take a minute to examine your life in prayer. Are there any areas of your life that you are unwilling to submit to the Lord and accept his will? Are there areas of unconfessed sin that needs to be put away from you? These kinds of questions help us understand whether we really are loving God with all that we are and have. Secondly, do you find yourself putting your needs above the needs of other? If so, we are not loving others as ourselves. What most needs to change with regard to your love for God and others?

Mark 12:35-40

In quoting Psalm 110:1; Jesus poses a question about himself to the crowd? What do you think is the correct answer?

Why does Jesus now include this warning Jewish leaders that are false teachers?

Summary: Jesus is saying that the Messiah, himself, would humanly descend from David when he took human form, but as God the Son, he is David's Lord. That is how he could be both a son of David and the Lord of David. After all of these encounters with his opponents, Jesus now summarizes his warning about their actions. This is in direct contrast to his actions as the Messiah. These teachers of the law would use the judges and courts to take advantage of people without the money to defend themselves.

Mark 12:41-44

What impressed Jesus so much about the giving of this widow despite giving such a small amount?

Why would Mark include this story here after talking about the greed of the teachers of the law?

Summary: Jesus clearly is impressed with percentage this widow gave, not the amount. She gave all she had. This is clearly a case of loving God with all that you have; the greatest commandment. In contrast, the teachers of the law are more interested in taking from widows, not giving like this widow.

Application: How would you describe your giving to the Lord? Does it resemble this widow? If not, what needs to change in your thinking and giving to become more like this?

Lesson 48

Mark 13:1-37

Look carefully at verses 1-4 and determine exactly what the disciples are asking Jesus about? How many and what questions do they ask?

Why does Jesus begin his answer with a warning against believing false prophets? How much of a role will false prophets play in the end times?

What will be other signs, according to verses 5-8, that will come before the actual times of the end?

According to verses 9-13, what will happen to followers of Jesus as we progress further toward these times of the end?

Look carefully at verses 14-23 and determine if Jesus is answering the question of when these things will happen or what the signs will be?

According to verses 24-27, what event will follow the distress of those events?

What does the lesson of the fig tree in verses 28-37 teach us about being prepared for these events?

Summary: Mark 13 is one of the most difficult chapters to understand in this Gospel. Even though the disciples may have thought that the destruction of the Temple would happen at the same time as Jesus' return, they were mistaken. Therefore, Jesus gives an answer to the two questions with an answer that moves back and forth between two separate events. In 70 AD, just 40 years after Jesus speaks these words, the Roman army under the general Titus, destroyed Jerusalem. That is when the Temple was completely torn down. Therefore, some of what Jesus says in replay refers to this event. On the other hand, we are still waiting for Jesus to return. That event has not taken place. Some of the parts of Jesus' answer refers to that event. We

need to look at the individual verses to see which they are referring to, and some verses refer to both events. We call this a multiple fulfillment of the prophecy. However, more than answering the question of when this all will happen, Jesus is more concerned that the disciples prepare properly and are ready. They must avoid false teaching and know that they will face persecution for following him to the end. Followers of Jesus must constantly be aware of what is happening in time, and be prepared for the Lord's return by remaining faithful to Jesus.

Application: Are you ready for the Lord's return? What must you need to do to become more prepared? What commands to Jesus' disciples in this chapter most applies to you?

Notes:

Lesson 49

Mark 14:1-9

Why were the Jewish leaders afraid of a riot if they arrested Jesus?

Why do you think Jesus received the very expensive gift and praised the woman for what she did?

Is Jesus telling them that they should ignore the poor, or that he is worthy of sacrificial worship?

Summary: Jesus not only makes it clear that this expensive perfume was a worthy gift for him, he again mentions his coming death. The people that objected to the perfume being used this way saw it as being wasted. Clearly, they were not recognizing how worthy Jesus was of this kind of worship or sacrifice.

Application: What is Jesus worthy of when it comes to your worship or sacrifice? Is there a limit to what we should be willing to give to him? Are you currently giving all that you have for him?

Mark 14:10-26

Why do you think Judas was willing to betray Jesus to the Jewish authorities?

What impresses you most about the preparations for the Passover meal?

Was Judas responsible for his sin even though his betraying Jesus was part of God's plan?

What do we learn about celebrating the Lord's Supper from what happened here at the Passover meal?

Summary: Judas may have had more than one reason for betraying Jesus to the Jewish authorities, but even that sinful action was part of God's plan. God's plan to provide a sacrifice for sin though the death of Jesus could not be destroyed by the sinful actions of a person, but in fact used it for good. However, Judas is still responsible for his sin. The Passover meal teaches

us that the bread and the cup symbolize the body and blood of Jesus that was sacrificed for our forgiveness. Therefore, whenever we celebrate the Lord's Supper we are remembering that sacrifice.

Application: How often do you think about Jesus' sacrifice for your sin? Do you regularly celebrate it with the Lord's Supper?

Mark 14:17-31

How does Peter's denial of Jesus compare with Judas' betrayal of Jesus?

What do you think motivated Peter to deny that he would betray Jesus? Read Proverbs 16:18 to help with your answer.

Summary: Peter was clearly making a prideful statement about not denying Jesus and was putting himself above the others in his devotion to Jesus. Proverbs 16:18 reminds us that relying on ourselves, rather than on God's strength, is a path to failure. That is the path Peter took in trusting in his own strength to do God's will.

Application: Where are you trusting in your own strength rather than the Lord's strength to do God's will?

Mark 14:32-52

What do you think is so upsetting to Jesus about the upcoming cross?

What do we learn about the disciples here and what they are able to do at this important time?

What do we see as the most important thing for Jesus; avoiding the cross or fulfilling the will of the Father?

While Jesus is being arrested, what do we see still motivating Peter's actions?

What impresses you about how Jesus handles his arrest?

Summary: As we shall soon see, there was very good reason for Jesus to be so upset about the coming cross. However, he is still fully committed to doing the Father's will no matter what price he has to pay. Meanwhile, we see Peter and the disciples acting again and again in the power of their own flesh and therefore, failing to do the will of God. They did not pray when they should have, and therefore were unprepared for the test that came when Jesus was arrested.

Application: How committed are you to doing God's will in your life, even when it means sacrifice? What actions can you point to in order to determine whether you are, or are not living with God's will as your priority?

Mark 14:53-65

Is Jesus still trying to keep his identity hidden, or has something changed from early in his ministry? What do you think has changed?

What is the effect of Jesus openly stating that he is the Son of God? Look at Exodus 3:14 to explain how the Jewish leaders understood his answer.

Why is there such a violent reaction from the Jewish leaders?

Summary: Jesus is now openly declaring that he is the Son of God because the time has come for his crucifixion. He knows that those who have rejected him as the Messiah will consider it blasphemy if he claims to be God or the Son of God. He also knows that they will demand his death for that blasphemy. However, Jesus is prepared to die according to the will of the Father as a sacrifice for sin.

Application: How much love for you, must Jesus have, to undergo this treatment for your forgiveness? Do we learn anything about the kind of treatment we can expect from those that hate Jesus?

Mark 14:66-72

Go back and look at verses :29-31 to remind yourself of Peter's promise to be faithful to Jesus. What has changed?

What do you think was motivating Peter in verses :29-31 and what do you think is motivating Peter's actions now?

Which statements did Peter make that he would most like to take back?

Summary: Peter was very prideful and trusting in himself when he promised to remain faithful to Jesus, no matter what. Now, with Jesus arrested, his hopes of Jesus becoming the new king are gone. He was motivated by pride earlier, now he is motivated by discouragement, so much so that he denies he even knows Jesus. He clearly still does not understand Jesus' mission as Messiah and instead is disappointed when Jesus does not meet his expectations.

Application: Can we learn anything from Peter about acting in pride rather than in humility? Proverbs 16:18 tells us that "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (ESV) What about you? Is pride more often behind your words and actions or humility?

Notes:

Lesson 50

Mark 15:1-15

What do you think was motivating the crowd to do what they did?

What was motivating Pilate to do what he did?

What is motivating Jesus to do what he did?

Summary: The Jewish leaders needed the Roman governor, Pilate, to execute Jesus. So, they handed him over to Pilate and then stirred up the crowd to call for his crucifixion. Pilate, meanwhile, cares about keeping the crowd happy so that they do not revolt, even though he knows Jesus is not guilty of the charges. Through all of this false accusation, Jesus is faithful to what he knows to be the will of his Father. Therefore, he only speaks the truth to Pilate about who he is in reality and admits to being the King of the Jews.

Application: Here we see the difference between remaining faithful to the will of God, despite the cost, and being motivated by our own selfish desires, like the leaders, the crowd and Pilate. Where do you think you most need to grow in this area of remaining faithful to God's will?

Mark 15:16-41

What was the reason that the Roman soldiers treated Jesus as they did?

How do you explain the treatment of the crowd and the other criminals that Jesus suffered?

How does this description of Jesus' crucifixion affect you mentally, spiritually and emotionally?

What do you think Jesus was expressing when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (ESV)

Why do you think Mark mentions all of these things happening after Jesus died?

Summary: Jesus is still rejected as the Messiah by the Romans and the crowd. They can only mock and insult him as a failure. However, Jesus is willing to suffer these unspeakable abuses, even though he was completely innocent, because he was accomplishing something much greater, the payment for sin so that sinners could be forgiven. Therefore, the opinions of people didn't matter in light of his commitment to fulfill God's will for him. He was faithful to the point of death, being judged by his Father for sins of others, not his own, so payment could be made for their sin. His death was meant that experienced the wrath of his Father, whereas before he had only known that love of the Father. The spiritual torment of the cross for Jesus was therefore, worse than the physical. But his death accomplished a way for sinful people to know God personally, which was symbolized by the tearing of the curtain of the Temple, which separated people from God except the High Priest. Even the Roman centurion, who had previously mocked Jesus, was now convinced he was the Messiah.

Application: What does the cross mean for you? How grateful are you for Jesus' sacrifice and what do you think should be your response?

Lesson 51

Mark 15:42-16:8

Why was it so important that the body of Jesus be cared for quickly?

Do you think there was any question that Jesus had actually died from crucifixion?

Why do you think Mark included this detail about Mary seeing where the body of Jesus was laid?

Summary: With the Sabbath coming at sundown, when no one was able to move about for 24 hours, it was critical that Jesus' body be cared for quickly. Joseph, along with Nicodemus, were granted his body, wrapped it, and placed it in a tomb. Finally, the opening to the tomb was sealed. There is no question therefore, that Jesus was actually and completely dead. The fact that Mary was able to see the tomb where Jesus' body was placed meant that there would be no mistake which tomb was later found empty. If Jesus had not really been raised from the dead, several people would have known where the body was located. But as we shall see, it was the same tomb that was found empty because Jesus had risen from the dead.

Application: What impresses you about the courage of Joseph, and as we know from John's Gospel, Nicodemus also, who took the body of Jesus and placed it in the tomb? What was at risk for them in identifying with Jesus? What risk are you willing to take in identifying yourself as a follower of Jesus?

Notes:

Lesson 52

Mark 16:1-20

What is significant about the women going to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices?

What was it about the news from the angel about Jesus rising from the dead that made the women so afraid?

After verse 8, the earliest copies of Mark do not include the following verses. However, the other Gospels do include the same basic information. Therefore, we are going to look at these verses as well. Why do you think everyone was so slow to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead?

How would you summarize these final instructions to the disciples about what comes next?

Summary: There is no question that Jesus was raised from the dead and appeared to his followers, even as they were in disbelief. His resurrection from the dead proved his power over death itself, and also proved that everything he said about being put to death and rising again could be completely believed. Jesus fulfilled this prophecy that he gave himself about himself. But beyond this display of power over death and faithfulness to his word, Jesus also gave his followers orders to be obeyed from that point forward. And those orders were to go to all the world with the news that he was risen, and that people must do what Jesus had already been calling them to do; repent and believe in him. He also promised his power would accompany that message that his followers were to take to the world.

Application: What difference does Jesus rising from the dead make in your life? What do you think is your responsibility to carry out these orders from Jesus as one of his followers? When and where are you going to begin?

Conclusion: A disciple of Jesus is a follower of Jesus who lives to fulfill Jesus' will for their life. You have now been through this Discipleship Plan in order to prepare you as a disciple of Jesus to do exactly that; to live now to fulfill his will for your life. Now that you have the knowledge and information to be a disciple, it becomes a matter of your *will* to live this way. Are you *willing* to live as a disciple of Jesus? As we have already learned, it requires the power of the Holy Spirit to live this way fruitfully. But we must first be willing. Are you *willing* to live in obedience to Jesus' will for your life? Are you willing to take others through this Discipleship Plan so that more disciples can be made and others can live in obedience to Jesus? This is what Jesus has called us to do as his followers. Are you one who is willing to make other disciples?

I am one, and I am willing to commit to make more disciples:

Signed: _____

Date: _____