

MARK 9-16

*For even the Son of
Man did not come to
be served, but to serve*



GOOD NEWS: MISSION

(10 BIBLE STUDIES)

EXAMINATION APPLICATION

BIBLE STUDIES

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THE SMALL PRINT

THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Co

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Your Commitment

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

Your Contribution

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

Your Preparation

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading group discussions, but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials provide you with the passage so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Also, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought, and help you reflect on what the passage meant, both at the time it was written, and also what it means for us now.

I would encourage you to make good use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are, however, only “tools” – they are there to help you, and not to restrict you, or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages, and if the questions or notes don't help you, simply don't use them!

I have also included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

Your Leadership

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

*Steve McClure
Spring 2019*

INTRODUCING THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark's gospel is written at pace. The action moves quickly - 'immediately' is a common joining word. Sentences are short. The first half contains Jesus' actions and teachings that reveal, to those with ears to hear, who Jesus is (Yahweh himself come to rescue his people as their anointed King) - while the 2nd half begins to focus much more on what he has come to do (die on a cross and rise again), and therefore what it means to follow him (take up our crosses and die for him that we might share in his life). Tradition has it that Mark wrote his gospel as Peter's memory and teaching about Jesus. That seems to make sense, we get quite a lot of Peter and - in a very humble way - a lot of Peter, and the other disciples not getting what Jesus is talking about. Tradition also has it that the gospel was written in Rome, for mostly Gentile readers at the heart of the empire. If that tradition is right it gives the first chapter a distinct edge. Mark skips over the birth of Jesus and dives right in "*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*". The word gospel throws us slightly - but it simply means "good news". The Roman world at this time proclaimed the "gospel of Caesar". The Roman world brought order and calm to the world, in exchange for total loyalty from its subjects. The problem with early Christians was that they had a higher loyalty, a higher Lord. The gospel is of Jesus the anointed King (Christ), the Son of God. Then comes the key to Mark's gospel. Mark quote two OT prophets and merges them together (Malachi and Isaiah), with the focus on Isaiah. "*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord (Yahweh) and make his paths straight*" Mark 1:3 (quoting Isaiah 40:3). Mark is quoting Isaiah, and in Mark's context the voice is that of John the Baptist. But it is most likely (and I think is usually true when you have an OT quote in the NT) that Mark has the Isaiah context in his head - and any of Mark's readers who knew the OT, which could have been quite a few - Jewish Christians, and those who had associated with the synagogue as Gentiles - would have thought of the whole passage at the start of Isaiah 40.

These are the words with which Isaiah tells of Yahweh coming to redeem his people and bring an end to exile. We know from Ezra-Nehemiah and Haggai-Malachi that the end of exile in the Persian era was a massive let down. It is possible that many Jews of Jesus' day were still themselves as in exile. It seems certainly true that Jesus and the first Christians saw Jesus as the one who brings an end to exile. Jesus is Yahweh walking on the earth as a man. He drives out demons. He heals the sick. He cleanses the leper. He forgives sins. He calls a people to himself and sends them out to bless those around. He teaches the crowds, he calms the seas, he drives his enemies under the water. He feeds many in a desolate place. He walks on water and calms the seas again. The blind see, the deaf hear and the lame walk. This is our God. Jesus joins the prophecies about a Messiah, with the prophecies about Yahweh coming and makes clear that Yahweh has come himself to do the job of King over his people. When he is recognised by Peter (at last) we then see the shock that no-one saw coming. Not only is Jesus Yahweh come to his people as their King, he is Yahweh come to earth as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 who comes to suffer and die for his people's sins. The greatest problem Israel face is not that they are paralysed and under Roman control. It is that they are rebels who have failed to follow God's ways. It is a problem they share with the rest of the world. And it is this problem that Jesus has come to deal with. And that is why Mark is always heading for the cross. To a hill outside the city. Where a man broken, bruised, flogged to within an inch of his life stumbles as he carries a splintered wooden cross. He refuses anything that would dull the pain or his senses. And Mark simply 'and they crucified him'. Four words in English that we can skip over. But in the Roman world of Mark's day people knew what that meant. They knew the physical agony devised by masters of torture. And

yet, that is not the focus of Mark's account. Mark shows us the mocking - the taunts - the ironies that it was precisely by not saving himself that Jesus, that God himself, becomes able to save us. He shows us the darkness as God's judgment falls over the land, and in particular on his Son. Remember the OT prophets and the way that the day of Yahweh so often has darkness. Here is that darkness. God himself hangs on a cross, taking on himself the punishment for our sin. There is mystery here. How can the Son be separate from the Father? And yet that mystery holds the reality that the Son willingly takes on that punishment. We can be quite rubbish about illustrations that make it sound like Jesus is an innocent victim picked out to suffer by angry God who needs to die before he can love us.

Always remember God has always loved us. Jesus' death does change his love. The love of the Father and the Son is what drives the cross - it is because God is love that on the cross the Son himself takes the punishment I deserve so that I can go free. Jesus cries out, actually quoting the start of Psalm 22 as he does "my God, my God, why have you forsaken me". Read all of Psalm 22 and see how David's sufferings as an innocent man prefigure Christ's sufferings for us. The words express Jesus' feelings at the time, the sense of utter aloneness. The one who had never sinned and had always endured perfect fellowship with the Father now knowing what guilt and alienation and deserved punishment feels like. The anguish of that forces this cry from his lips.

And yet in this cry are the seeds of hope - the Psalm doesn't end in alienation. It ends in new life. Jesus' cry points Mark's hearers to the resurrection hope contained in the crucified God on the cross.

Then Jesus dies. The temple curtain is torn in two. Maybe so we can go in - or just maybe, because God has come out. Out from the Holy Place and into the world on a mission to transform the whole cosmos into his Holy Place. The way to God is no longer through multiple rituals, but by trusting in his death for us. In receiving his Spirit and new life - a life lived for God's glory in the world to transform the world. The Roman centurion gets it. He sees who Jesus is, even as the religious leaders fail. And the women stay watching, waiting and listening. It is these women who come to the tomb early in the morning after Joseph, a council member, takes courage to bury Jesus' body. The women go the tomb - but there is no one there. Just a young man (Matthew said angel - remember angel= messenger, and they often look human like) dressed in white. He tells them that Jesus is risen and will see them in Galilee, just as he said. The women are charged to go and tell the disciples - and Peter. Peter, the man who denied Jesus because of his fears has a special mention. At that the women flee and say nothing to anyone because they are afraid. The gospel ends there. Other endings are later additions, probably because the gospel seems to demand an ending. But maybe that's just the point. The question as we stand with the women, hearing the angel's voice, what will we do? Who we will tell? What difference will the crucified yet risen Jesus make in our lives?

Mark Arnold (Quoted from <https://rozandmark.wordpress.com/2019/04/19/mark-god-crucified/>)

STUDY 1 – MARK 9:1-32 – SUFFERING AND GLORY

INTRODUCTION: This study brings us up close with Jesus as He is transfigured before Peter, James & John and as He encounters a boy possessed by an evil spirit. Amidst another prediction of Jesus' future suffering we see glimpses of His true glory, authority and power.

SETTING THE SCENE: Think of a significant experience that you have had (a mountain top experience): what was it that made it so memorable and/or important for you? How would you say that we experience God: consider examples from scripture and how you have experienced God yourself?

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THE TRANSFIGURATION (v2-13): What does it mean to be transfigured and how do you respond to the description of what happened to Jesus (v2-3)? What do you imagine it would've been like to have been one of the three disciples Jesus took up the mountain (what do you see, hear & feel)?

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MOSES & ELIJAH (v4-6, 9-13): What do Moses and Elijah they symbolise or represent, and what similarities did their ministry share with Jesus'? Who is the 'Elijah who must come' and why is he mentioned here (See also Malachi 4)?

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THIS IS MY SON (v7-8): Why was the voice from the cloud so important to hear both for the disciples and for Jesus? On which other occasions does God speak audibly to Jesus, and why? What comparisons might we draw with other Biblical figures who encountered God personally on mountains?

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BELIEF AND UNBELIEF (v14-29): What do you make of Jesus' interaction with the people in this second story (i.e. His disciples, the crowd, the man and his son)? What is surprising about His words and actions here? What do you think these people would have thought and felt about these events?

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EMBRACING THE SUPERNATURAL: What is your reaction to impure spirits (v25) and the idea of being possessed by such a spirit (v17)? What is the impact of the spirit on the life of the boy (v17-18a, v21-22a)? How do you understand the spirits strong reaction to Jesus (v20, 26)?

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HOW LONG MUST I PUT UP WITH YOU? What does this incident tell us about the nature of belief and unbelief (esp. 22b? Why was so harsh on the disciples (v19) in calling them an *unbelieving generation*? Why do you think the disciples were unable to drive out the *impure spirit* (v18b, v28-29)?

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SECOND PREDICTION OF DEATH (v30-32): How does this second prediction contrast with Jesus' first prediction back in 8:31-32? How do you respond to the disciple's lack of understanding and their fear about asking Him about it?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: How do you reconcile Jesus words about *suffering* (e.g. His own death and taking up our cross, see 8:31-37) with His words about glory (e.g. Jesus says '*He will come in His Father's glory*' 8:38 and the events of the transfiguration)? Do these encounters with Jesus give you any insight into your own encounters with God? How have you seen God glorified through your life?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God that in Christ we too are loved as sons and daughters. Pray that you each would experience God more in the everyday things of life. Ask God to protect you from the forces of evil and learn to respond in belief rather than unbelief.

MEMORY VERSES: ROMANS 8:17-18

STUDY 2 – MARK 9:33-50 – TRUE GREATNESS

INTRODUCTION: The disciples are interested in greatest but for Jesus they have it the wrong way around. In the Kingdom of God Jesus values servanthood, giving cups of water in his name and not doing anything to cause another to stumble. Jesus turns our supposed wisdom on its head!

SETTING THE SCENE: If you are asked your friends what is true greatness, what do you think they would say and why? To what extent can you personally identify with the desire to be *great* or *successful*? How do you this worked out in your schedule and priorities?

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GREATNESS (v33-35): Why were the disciples keen to argue amongst themselves, but not to answer Jesus' question? To what extent is it wrong to want to be *the greatest*? How would you define true greatness? What are the implications of the *first* becoming the *very last*?

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EXAMPLE OF WELCOMING CHILDREN (v36-37): How would the disciples have perceived children? How would Jesus making the child their example have challenged their expectations and ideas about greatness? How does Jesus use this example to explain what it means to be the *servant of all* (v35)?

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FOR AND AGAINST (v38-41): Why does John feel the need to point out what others are doing? How does Jesus reconcile this supposed conflict? Does he contradict his own words in Matt 7:21-23?

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Who would you say was 'for Jesus' or 'against Jesus' today, using Jesus' own criteria? What implications are there for us as Jesus' ambassadors? What do you think Jesus means about those serving in His name not losing their reward (v41)?

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CAUSING OTHERS TO STUMBLE (v42): Who are the 'little ones' (v42) Jesus refers to? In what ways might we cause others to stumble in their walk with God? What is your reaction to Jesus' idea that it would be better to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone around our necks?

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STUMBLING OURSELVES (v43-49): How do you understand Jesus' graphic imagery in v 42-49? How literally should we take Jesus here: i.e. why is taking such radical steps not going to prevent us stumbling? Is there a difference between bring *thrown into hell* (v47) and being *salted with fire* (v49)?

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SALTY (v50): How is Jesus' image of being salt (see also Matt 5:13-16) relevant to the disciples? How can we be 'salt' (salt preserves and brings flavour)? What does it look like for salt to lose its saltiness? How does the salt *among* us help us to be at peace with each other (1 Thess 5:13)?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Reflecting on the radical teaching that Jesus gives in this chapter what would be the thing that most challenges you and/or the thing that most runs counter to our culture? How would you summarise what we have seen in this study about Jesus' definition of true greatness?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Think about ways in which you may have caused others to stumble, and pray through these, asking God for forgiveness. Pray for God's wisdom to help you shape your lives around God's priorities rather than your own.

MEMORY VERSE: MARK 9:50

STUDY 3 – MARK 10:1-31 – RELATIONSHIPS AND WEALTH

INTRODUCTION: Jesus now teaches on relationships in the family (marriage and divorce) and our relationships more socially (children and the rich). In this section Jesus shows us how a life following Him should transform these relationships and also our attitude towards wealth.

SETTING THE SCENE: Why do our hard and stubborn hearts make relationships so difficult? Why do relationships and wealth often make it very difficult for us to follow Jesus?

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DIVORCE (v1-5): Why do you think the Pharisees test Jesus on this issue? What do you make of Jesus's response, referring back to the Law of Moses? How do you respond to Jesus's allegation that men's hearts are hard? Why would have been cause to permit divorce in the Law?

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MARRIAGE (v6-12): Why do you think Jesus counteracts what Moses made permissible, with God's original design for marriage found in Gen 1:27 & 2:24? How do you respond to Jesus's hard-line response to the Disciples' further questions about those who divorce and re-marry being guilty of adultery? How do we reconcile Jesus' response here to our understanding of Grace?

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THE HEARTS OF CHILDREN (v13-16): How do you perceive Jesus' importance of these children who are brought to Him? Why does He rebuke the disciples for trying to interfere with them coming to Him? How we should we receive the Kingdom of God and why does Jesus say that it belongs to little children? What would it look like for us to do this in our everyday walk with God?

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WEALTH AND THE KINGDOM (v17-23): What do we think of this man who comes to Jesus; is he a liar or a fool for declaring that he has kept the Law since his youth? Does Jesus imply that following the Law is sufficient to inherit eternal life?

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Why does Jesus tell him that he must sell all that he has before he follows Him? Why do you think that sometimes we develop an attitude of keeping a list of the laws we obey? Why do you think Jesus believes that it is difficult for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God?

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GIVING UP EVERYTHING (v24-31): How do we respond to Jesus's declaration that it is very difficult to enter the Kingdom of God? What do you make of the disciples response? How does Jesus dismiss their fears that no-one can be saved?

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How can we become like little children in receiving the Kingdom of God? Are there things that we don't think we could give up to follow Jesus? What do you understand this 100fold reward to mean both in the present age and in the ae to come (v29-30)?

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DRAW IT TOGETHER: What has most impacted you from this passage about what following Jesus means for our relationships and our attitude to wealth? What is one thing that has encouraged you and one thing that has really challenged you?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the relationships that He has given us and ask Him to help us come to them with integrity and commitment. Pray too that we would have a light grip on wealth and possessions remembering that the reward Jesus offers is so much more fulfilling.

MEMORY VERSES: MARK 10:14-15

STUDY 4 – MARK 10:32-52 – BLINDNESS AND SIGHT

INTRODUCTION: The disciples were unable to understand Jesus' predictions about his death and resurrection. James and John were spiritually blind and thinking only of their own position. Bartimaeus was physically blind but received his sight because he had faith in Jesus' ability to heal.

SETTING THE SCENE: What do you imagine it would be like to be physically blind? The characters involved in this chapter struggle with physical and spiritual blindness: what would you say are the major differences? Have you ever felt spiritually blind and if so how did it affect you?

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JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH (v32-34): How do you think the disciples felt when they heard Jesus predicting His death for the third time (See 8:31 & 9:31)? How do you think you would have felt? Why do you think the disciples seemed blind to what Jesus was saying? In what ways do these words seem at odds with what we have learned about Jesus' identity so far in Mark's account?

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AN AUDACIOUS REQUEST (v35-45): What do you think about the nature of James and John's request (v35-37), and in particular the timing of the request (straight after Jesus' third prediction of His death)? What do you think motivated their request?

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JESUS' CUP AND BAPTISM (v38-40): How do you understand Jesus' response to James & John in these verses? In what ways did they not know what they were asking? What does Jesus mean by *His cup* and *His baptism* (v38)? Why were the other disciples *'indignant'* with James and John?

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TRUE GREATNESS (v42-45): What did Jesus mean when he said that true greatness comes from being a servant (v43-44)? How does Isaiah 53:6 & 11-12 help us understand why Jesus came to serve? In what ways do you look to for position in life, and what lies behind these desires?

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HAVING OUR SIGHT RESTORED (v46-52): Why did Bartimaeus call out '*Son of David, have mercy on me!*' (v47) and why did many people rebuke him? Can you think of any situations in your life where peer pressure has tried to stop you coming to God?

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WANTING TO SEE: Why does Jesus ask the question '*what do you want me to do for you?*'; i.e. was it not obvious? In what ways does Jesus enable him to see? What do we see of Bartimaeus' faith so that Jesus can see that his faith has healed him (v52)? How is his life transformed as a result?

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PRESUMPTION AND THE WILL OF GOD: Can you think of times when you have assumed that you know what you and other people need and how God should work in our lives to achieve it? Can you think of prayers that with hindsight, you are glad that God answered with a 'no'?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: These encounters both include the same question: '*what do you want me to do for you?*' (See v36 & 50). How would you answer Jesus' question in your own life? What lessons has God been teaching you about what it means to see past our blindness?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for the way(s) that God has enabled you to see Him and appreciate all that He has done for you. Pray for spiritual insight for each other, and for God to open the eyes of your friends and family who do not yet know him.

MEMORY VERSE: MARK 10:45

STUDY 5 – MARK 11 – ARRIVING IN JERUSALEM

INTRODUCTION: Jesus now arrives in Jerusalem and is immediately making a huge impact. He enters Jerusalem triumphantly as a King and is not afraid to challenge the religious establishment of the day. In contrast Jesus uses a withered fig tree to illustrate the state of the nation of Israel.

SETTING THE SCENE: Increasingly Jesus appears to defy the expectations people had of the coming Messiah. In your own life, how have you experienced contrasting expectations creating very different responses? Why do expectations matter so much?

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COMING KING (v1-11): Throughout Mark's account Jesus has shied away from revealing his identity (e.g. 1:44-45, 8:29-30): what message does this scene paint? What were people expecting from the Messiah (Zechariah 9:9-13)? Why was this triumphant entry necessary?

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How do you understand the way that people welcome Jesus to Jerusalem (v8-10) given what we know happens to him a short while later? What is the significance of the blessings mentioned for he who comes in the *name of the Lord* and the coming *Kingdom of David*?

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JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE (v15-17): What is the big deal with what was happening in the temple that causes Jesus to react so strongly? When might we describe anger positively (a righteous anger) rather than negatively? Why is it so important to see that this had been prophesied (Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11)? What kind of ways can we act similarly in our Christian communities?

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JESUS AND THE FIG TREE (v12-14, 18-26): Either side of the account of Jesus clearing the temple we read about a fig tree: what do you make of this curious encounter? In what ways is the *withered* fig tree illustrative of what Jesus had observed about Israel?

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After Peter points out the withered tree Jesus tells them to have faith in God: in what sense can faith allow us to move mountains (v23)? How does this principle help us understand the power of prayer and the importance of praying in faith (v24-25)? In what ways might these verses be misunderstood?

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AUTHORITY (v27-33): This section is the beginning of a series of questions from the religious authorities that continues into our next study: why do you think that they questioned Jesus about authority and what can we learn from the way that Jesus responds?

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Jesus often asks questions: why is asking questions (rather than jumping in with answers) such an important skill for us? What examples can you give of how your own questions have transformed conversations? How does Jesus' question help expose the motives of the religious authorities?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What new things do we see in this passage about who Jesus is and what He came to do? How can we learn from his teaching about praying in faith and his willingness to challenge things that were not right? What is the one thing that really stands out here for you?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Praise God that Jesus really is the King who deserves our worship. Ask God to help you to show righteous (not unrighteous) anger when necessary and to be committed to praying to Him with the kind of faith that can move mountains.

MEMORY VERSE: MARK 11:9

STUDY 6 – MARK 12 – EXPOSING OUR MOTIVES

INTRODUCTION: Mark records further questions from the religious authorities on the subjects of tax, the resurrection and the greatest commandment. Jesus also has plenty of conversation topics Himself with the parable of the tenants, the Messiah, sacrificial giving and a strong warning against hypocrisy.

SETTING THE SCENE: Can you think of examples where your motivations have been good and when they have not been so good? What kinds of things motivated your behaviour: i.e. why did you act the way that you did? How can we influence the motivations that lie behind our actions?

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PARABLE OF THE TENANTS (v1-12): Who do the characters in the parable represent (owner; farmers; servants, son & others)? Who do you best identify with? The backdrop here is Isaiah 5:1-7; how might this passage help us to understand what it is that Jesus is trying to say through the parable?

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How do you think you would have reacted to this (note their reactions, v12 and the quotation from Psalm 118:22-23)? What does this parable have to do with the challenge to His authority in 11:27-33?

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PAYING TAXES TO CAESAR (v13-17): How does Jesus' reaction to the question in v14 mirror His response to the previous question in 11:37-33? Jesus implies that the denarius belonged to Caesar because his image was on it and he'd made it: if we bear God's image (Gen 1-2), what implications does this have for how we live our lives? What does it mean to give to God what is rightfully His?

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MARRIAGE AT THE RESURRECTION (v18-27): What motivated the Sadducees question about the resurrection? What light does Jesus' response (v24-27) to their question (v18-23) about the resurrection shed on the future of marriage and sex (See also Matthew 19:1-12, Luke 20:34-38)?

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THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT (v28-34): What do you think motivated this teacher of the law in his question to Jesus (v28)? The man is clearly impressed with Jesus' response (v29-31): why does Jesus tell this man that he is *not far from the Kingdom of God* (v34) following his response in v32-33?
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A QUESTION OF LINEAGE (v35-37): In these verses Jesus poses His own question about the Messiah being the Son of David even though David Himself called Him Lord: how do you make sense of these words and why did these words cause the large crowd to listen with delight?
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A WARNING AGAINST HYPOCRISY (v38-40): Building on the parable Jesus now warns them against the teachers of the law: what is your reaction to these strong words from Jesus? What lessons might these words have for us today: I.e. what similar traps might we fall into?
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SACRIFICIAL GIVING (v41-44): Why do you think Jesus draws attention to this poor widow who gave out of her poverty (v44)? What does this act tell us about her motivations in giving? What steps might you need to take to ensure that you are giving sacrificially also?
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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Where in this passage do you see healthy motivations and where do you see unhealthy motivations? What would it take to begin to imitate the former and not the latter?
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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share your reaction to the practical things included here (marriage, tax, hypocrisy, giving and motives). Ask God to begin to transform you from the inside out in these areas.

MEMORY VERSES: MARK 12:43-44

STUDY 7 – MARK 13 – END TIMES

INTRODUCTION: In this section a discussion about the architecture in Jerusalem (and specifically the temple) leads Jesus to teach on the subject of the future. Jesus helps us here to watch and wait for all that is still to come: specifically the signs of the times that must happen before Jesus' return.

SETTING THE SCENE: Think of a time when you have been waiting for something: how would describe the circumstances of this occasion? What was it like to have to wait? During the waiting would you say that you were more expectant or despondent?

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TELL US WHEN (v1-4): One of the disciples is serious impressed with the architecture: what is Jesus trying to teach through his response in v2? Why was the destruction of the temple (which did happen 40 years later) such a big deal (See also Matthew 12:6)? What exactly do you think the disciples looking for in answer to their question in v4 about times and signs?

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES (v5-13): What could motivate people to try and deceive us with the name of Jesus (v5-6)? Jesus says a whole bunch of things must happen but the end is still will come (v7): what is your response to this list of things? Which of these has or is happening and what is still to come?

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Jesus says that we will suffer on account of Him (v9): what is your experience of receiving the help that He promises during these times (v11)? How do you respond to the family divisions created by the gospel (v12-13)? How are we getting on at preaching the gospel to all nations?

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BE ON YOUR GUARD (v14-23): These are difficult words that have been the subject of much debate: what things can we be sure of and what initial questions arise from the things that are more confusing? In such difficult times what might it look like to be on our guard?

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What is said about the *Abomination that causes desolation* in v14a (see references in Daniel 9:27, 11:31 & 12:11)? What does Jesus tell us to do when he appears (v14b-18)? Following this will be a period of great distress: why does Jesus go to lengths to tell us about this in advance (v23)?

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JESUS IS COMING BACK (v24-31): How does Jesus describe what it will be like when He comes back? Following the difficult words in v14-23 in what ways are Jesus' words in v24-27 encouraging? What is the lesson of the fig tree (v28-29) and why are Jesus' words so enduring (v30-31)?

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ONLY THE FATHER KNOWS (v32-37): Finally Jesus comes to the question of timings: why do you think that only the Father knows the time of Jesus' return? Jesus gives an illustration of a man going away leaving his servants in charge (v34): how does this illustration help you to understand what it means to *keep watch* and *be on your guard* (also mentioned in v5, 9, 23 & 33)?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: How would you summarise the overall message of this chapter (i.e. what is Jesus trying to teach us through it)? What practical steps do you need to take in light of this chapter?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Worship God that He is sending His Son back again in great power and glory. Ask God to help you to keep watch and to be on your guard. Ask God to help you make the most of all the opportunities that life brings for service to Him during the waiting.

MEMORY VERSES: MARK 13:32-33

STUDY 8 – MARK 14:1-42 – PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION: Chapter 14 takes us into the final moments before Jesus is arrested and heads unwaveringly towards the cross. Once anointed, He celebrates the Last Supper with His disciples before predicting Peter's betrayal and heading out into Gethsemane to pray.

SETTING THE SCENE: Think about a significant moment in your life: what helped you to prepare for that moment? What is your experience of betrayal: what was it like and how did it make you feel?

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ANOINTED AT BETHANY (v1-11): The religious leaders were plotting to kill Jesus (v1-2) and this encounter demonstrates a very different response to Jesus. What is your immediate reaction to what this woman did for Jesus? How would you answer the question 'was this wasteful' (see v5a)?

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INDIGNANT OR BEAUTIFUL (v4-9): Why do you think that the disciples are so indignant about what she had done for Jesus? How do you square Jesus' contrasting response in calling what she had done beautiful? How might the different people have responded to Jesus' incredible statement in v9?

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JUDAS' BETRAYAL (v10-11, 17-21): How does John 12:4-6, help us to understand what Judas then does in these verses? How do you respond to Jesus' strong words in v21 for his betrayer?

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In Psalm 55:12-14 David wrestles with how his friend could become his enemy: how would knowing that one of his own disciples would betray him in this manner have made Jesus feel? John 13:17-18 makes clear that Jesus knew who would betray Him: to what extent did Judas have choice in this?

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THE LAST SUPPER (v12-16 & 22-26): Jesus sends His disciples off to make preparation for them to celebrate the Passover meal: looking back to Exodus 11-13 what was this celebration all about? What is the significance of Jesus' specific instructions to the disciples as they went into the city?

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Jesus reinterprets the Passover meal: how do you understand the symbolism of the bread and the cup in this meal (the cause of much debate for centuries)? What is the significance of Jesus' declaration in v25 that he will not drink again of the *fruit of the vine* until he drinks it *anew in the kingdom of God*?

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MORE PREDICTIONS (v27-31): Jesus predicts that the disciples would all fall away (Zech 13:7): to what extent can you identify with Peter's bold declaration that he would most certainly not? What are the similarities/differences between Judas and Peter (who Jesus predicted would both let Him down)?

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GETHSEMANE (v32-42): What caused Jesus to be troubled, distressed and overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death? Why does He ask His Father to take this cup from Him? How does Jesus demonstrate and model submission, obedience and dependence to His Father? Why do Peter, James & John struggle to stay awake, how might both they and Jesus have felt about their failure to do so?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: How did the events of this prepare both Jesus and His disciples ahead of what was still to come? How do we apply a passage like this which includes no instructions but plenty of challenging narrative about all that Jesus came to do for us?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Worship God for the gift of His Son and for His willingness to go to the Cross in obedience to His Father. Ask God to foster in you a similar willingness to sacrifice and obey.

MEMORY VERSE: MARK 14:38

STUDY 9 – MARK 14:43-15:20 – BETRAYED

INTRODUCTION: This passage is all about betrayal as first Judas sells Jesus out and then Peter disowns Him as He had predicted. Jesus is tried before the Sanhedrin and then Pilate before being handed over to Roman soldiers to be crucified.

SETTING THE SCENE: Can you think of a time when someone has either let you down (betrayal) or when someone has wrongly accused you of something that you did not do (injustice): how did it make you feel? What was the hardest thing about this experience?

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ARRESTED (14:43-52): Imagine you were there at Jesus' arrest: what kind of things stand out to you about how the different characters act in these moments (e.g. Judas' kiss, weapons brought by the crowd or the naked man fleeing)? How do you respond to Jesus' belief that Scripture must be fulfilled?

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The other gospels add detail to the incident of the High Priest's servant being struck and losing his ear: how do John 18:10 & Luke 22:51 help us to understand why this happened and why there does not appear to be further repercussions from this?

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AT THE SANHEDRIN (14:53:65): On what basis had the religious authorities arrested Jesus and what evidence did they have against Jesus? How do you understand their desperation to get rid of Jesus? In what ways was Jesus' trial both unjust and illegal under Jewish law (See v56-57, v64, Deut 17:6)?

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Initially Jesus remains silent (v61a) before His accusers: why do you think this is (see also 1 Peter 2:22-25 and Isaiah 53:7)? At the second time of asking Jesus does respond: why did what Jesus said make the High Priest so angry (v61b-65)?

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DISOWNING JESUS (14:66-72): We know Peter followed Jesus to the courtyard of the High Priest (v54): why do you think motivated Peter to do this especially after his earlier actions? What might have been Peter's reasons for denying that he knew Jesus? How do you think Peter felt when he heard the cock crow and he remembered what Jesus had said (see also Luke 22:61)?

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BEFORE PILATE (15:1-15): What do we learn here about Pilate from the way that he goes about dealing with Jesus' case? It was the custom to release a prisoner and Pilate offers the choice between Jesus or the murderer named Barabbas: why do you think Pilate is so eager to keep out of this?

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Why do you think that Pilate relents and gives the order to have Jesus crucified (See also Matthew 27:24)? What can we learn about Pilate, the things he believed in and his priorities?

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MOCKING JESUS (15:16-20): These verses, which detail the physical and emotional suffering Jesus faced, make for difficult reading: how do they help you to appreciate all that Jesus did for us? With the memory verse in mind (see below) what can we learn from Jesus' example to us in all of this?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Who from this chapter do you most identify and/or sympathise with (e.g. Judas, Peter, Pilate, Barabbas)? What impact does this passage have for your daily lives?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank Jesus for willingly choosing the cross when even His own friends turned against Him. Ask God to help you to be faithful and demonstrate loyalty even when the pressure is on.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 PETER 2:23

STUDY 10 – MARK 15:21-16:20 – DEATH AND RESURRECTION

INTRODUCTION: Mark finishes with Jesus' death, resurrection and burial and he is eager to ensure that we are left under no illusion that Jesus rose from the dead. Despite the inclusion of 16:9-20 it seems that Mark's gospel ends on a cliff-hanger – what will we make of Jesus?

SETTING THE SCENE: Consider how you would evaluate the truthfulness of an account of an event you have recently witnessed: what kind of details/clues would indicate authenticity or fabrication? With regard to Jesus' death and resurrection what kind of evidence would you be looking for?

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HIS CRUCIFIXION (15:21-32): What do you notice from these verses regarding the details that Mark includes in his account? How were the events of Jesus' crucifixion a fulfilment of prophecy (v23 see Mark 14:25 & Numbers 6:3, v24 see Psalm 22:18, Deut 21:22-23, v27 see Isaiah 53:9)?

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What can we learn from those who were observers to these things: e.g. Simon (v21), the two rebels (27), those passing by (v29-30) and the chief priests & teachers of the law (v31-32)?

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HIS DEATH (15:33-41): In what ways does Jesus' death fulfil prophecy (v33 see Deut 16:6 & Amos 8:9, v34 see Psalm 22:1 & Malachi 4:5, v37-38 see Gen 3:24, Exodus 26:31-35 & 2 Chron 3:14)?

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What other significance do you see from the details that Mark records for us? For example why did people think Jesus was calling Elijah, what do you think caused the Centurion to exclaim that Jesus was the *Son of God* (v39) or why is the *darkness* or the *curtain torn from top to bottom* significant?

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HIS BURIAL (15:42-47): What do you think motivated Joseph's actions here regarding Jesus' body (see also Matt 27:57 & John 19:38)? Again the small details recorded here tell us a lot: why would Mark record Pilate's surprise, the rolled stone and the two Marys seeing where they laid Him?

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GOOD NEWS: How do the details recorded by Mark here help us understand the good news of why Jesus came (E.g. Curtain torn, darkness, God forsaking His Son etc)? Why was the cross so necessary? Why couldn't Jesus just come down from the cross that they might see and believe?

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RESURRECTION (16:1-8): What facts about the resurrection does Mark really emphasise and stress? Is it possible that Jesus was not really dead (swoon theory) or that others (e.g. Disciples, Jews, Romans) took the body: i.e. how would you use this passage to support a belief in the resurrection?

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IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION: Why is the resurrection so important that Paul would say that otherwise *our preaching* and *our faith* is in vain (1 Cor 15)? How much are we motivated by *hope*, and specifically the resurrection? How does hope motivate us to go and preach the gospel (16:15)?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What do you make of the ending of Mark's gospel? Do you think it should end at v8 (on a cliff-hanger) or at v16 (including the section not included in most early manuscripts)? Why and does it really matter?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God for His willingness to put Jesus through all of this for us. Praise Him that Jesus' sacrifice is such good news for us. Pray for opportunities to share this with our friends.

MEMORY VERSE: MARK 15:39

MEMORY VERSES

STUDY 01: MARK 9:1-32 – SUFFERING AND GLORY

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” **Romans 8:17-18**

STUDY 02: MARK 9:33-50 – TRUE GREATNESS

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.” **Mark 9:50**

STUDY 03: MARK 10:1-31 – RELATIONSHIPS AND WEALTH

“When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” **Mark 10:14-15**

STUDY 04: MARK 10:32-52 – BLINDNESS AND SIGHT

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” **Mark 10:45**

STUDY 05: MARK 11 – ARRIVING IN JERUSALEM

“Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, ‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’” **Mark 11:9**

STUDY 06: MARK 12 – EXPOSING OUR MOTIVES

“Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything – all she had to live on.’” **Mark 12:43-44**

STUDY 07: MARK 13 – END TIMES

“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come.” **Mark 13:32-33**

STUDY 08: MARK 14:1-42 – PREPARATION

“Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” **Mark 14:38**

STUDY 09: MARK 14:43-15:20 – BETRAYED

“When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.” **1 Peter 2:23**

STUDY 10: MARK 15:21-16:20 – DEATH AND RESURRECTION

“And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, ‘Surely this man was the Son of God!’” **Mark 15:39**