

GROUP GUIDE TO

On the move with Jesus in Mark (chapters 5-8)

(Based on the commentary available from www.commongroundchurch.co.za in 'Free Resources' and in 'Explore the Bible')

THE BIBLE IN OUR GROUPS

- A Christian cannot happily live without the Bible anymore than a person could happily live without air, food, water, heat or direction. That's why it's important that Christians - *preferably on a daily basis* - learn to breathe its oxygen, feed on its nourishment, drink its refreshment, absorb its energy, and obey its instruction.
- The very first thing that the first church devoted themselves to in their gathering was "the apostle's teaching" (see Acts 2:42) which is now recorded for us in the Bible. That's why God's Word is so central in our gatherings, both our large Sunday ones, and in our small groups.
- Getting into God's Word *together* helps us get even deeper into God's Word, and it helps the Word get deeper into us. Someone said, "It doesn't matter how much of the Bible you go through, what really matters is how much of the Bible goes through you." That's why we explore the Bible *alone and together*. What's more, exploring the Bible together greatly motivates us all to explore the Bible alone.
- The average weekly small group gathering consists of three main components: 1) Bonding time (where we get into each other's lives); 2) The prayer encounter (where we get into God's presence); and 3) Life-shaping conversation (where we get into God's Word). This guide impacts the life-shaping conversation part of the gathering.
- In your group devote four weeks to Mark, chapters 5-8. Everyone in the group is to read a chapter (usually), with the commentary as an aid, as preparation and come ready to have a "life-shaping conversation" based on it in the group.

OUTLINE

Week Before

- The small group leader needs to:
 - Make sure everyone has an electronic or printed out copy of the Mark commentary, called “On the move with Jesus in Mark”.
 - Motivate everyone to read through chapter 5 of Mark in their daily devotions during the week.
 - Explain that they don’t need to read all of the commentary, but that it will help them when they come across those verses that either don’t make sense, or they don’t know how to apply to their lives.
 - Encouragingly instruct them to try come ready to share: 1) What major insight into the Bible (from Mark 5) you discovered; 2) What one or two things you believe God said to you through it; and 3) How what he said impacts your life.
 - Assure everyone that even if they don’t do this reading, they should still come, because they will get much out of the time next week. (This is why it’s also suitable to keep inviting new people to the group).

Week One

- **Ice-breaker question:** (Note to leader: an ice-breaker is meant to be brief, to get the ball rolling, to not necessarily be spiritual and to help people get to know each other) “The commentary of Mark 5 tells us ‘when you face a set-back, don’t step back, because God is planning your come-back’. Have you experienced this to be true in your own life in any way?”
- Slowly read through the main points from the commentary of Mark 5 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want. Also read all or part of Mark 5.
- **Discovering Bible insights:** “Of all you read in Mark this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?”
- **Discerning God’s message:** “As you pondered Mark this week, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?”
- **Responding to God’s message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: “This week, please read Mark 6 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share: 1) What major insight into the Bible you discovered; 2) What one or two things you believe God said to you through it; and 3) How what he said impacts your life.

JESUS SETS A MAN FREE (5:1-20)

- Satan seeks to wreck lives.
- Jesus has authority to set people free.
- Never reject the light.

- Tell people what Jesus has done for you.

EXPERIENCING JESUS' RESCUING POWER (5:21-43)

- The best thing to do when in distress is go to Jesus.
- Invite Jesus' rescuing power into you life and situation through faith.
- If you face a setback, don't step back – God's planning your come back.
- Jesus has power and authority over dangers, demons, disease and death.

Week Two

- **Ice-breaker question:** “In Mark 6:1-6 the commentary draws attention to the fact that Jesus understands the strains of work and family life. What, if any are some of the strains you're currently experiencing in these areas?”
- Slowly read through the main points from the commentary of Mark 6 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want. Also read all or part of Mark 6.
- **Discovering Bible insights:** “Of all you read in Mark this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?”
- **Discerning God's message:** “As you pondered Mark this week, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you?” specifically?”
- **Responding to God's message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: “This week, please read Mark 7 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share: 1) What major insight into the Bible you discovered; 2) What one or two things you believe God said to you through it; and 3) How what he said impacts your life.

BEWARE OF UNBELIEF (6:1-6a)

- Beware of unbelief especially when considering who Jesus is.
- Jesus understands the strains of family life and work life.
- Christ is able to reach our family members who are far from him.
- Beware of the unbelief that so easily grows in the seedbed of familiarity.
- Beware of unbelief because it hinders the coming of the kingdom in our lives and situations.

SENT OUT BY CHRIST (6:6b-13)

- Opposition to God's work is an ideal opportunity to expand God's work.
- Christ calls you closer to himself before he sends you out.
- Christ calls you to team together with other disciples.
- Before embarking on a mission trip, give both practical and spiritual thought to how you will survive.
- You *are* responsible for communicating God's message to people, but you *aren't* responsible for how they respond to that message.
- Announce and demonstrate the new thing God is doing in the world through Jesus.
- Healthcare and Gospel proclamation can go hand in hand.

REPENT OR ELSE ... (6:14-29)

- There are so many opinions about who Jesus really was and is, but so many of them are plain wrong.
- If you don't repent of your sin you may be given more chances to repent, but eventually it will be too late.
- If you don't repent of your sin it will progressively harden your heart.
- If you don't repent of your sin, that sin will lead to more and more sin.

THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND (6:30-44)

- Make sure that you rest after an intensive time of work and/or ministry.
- The best gift you can give to people is God's word.
- Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.
- Christ can use the little you have to accomplish his great purposes through you.
- The main point of this event is that Christ is the Messiah-king.

JESUS AND THE DIFFICULTIES WE FACE (6:45-55)

- The busier you get the more you need to pray.
- Christ is watching your obedience even when you feel it's not getting you anywhere.
- Christ is with you in your difficulties even when you fail to realize it.
- Until you realize that Jesus is the Messiah-king you will be overly amazed by the miracles he performed (and still performs).
- After the difficulty comes the blessing.

Week Three

- **Ice-breaker question:** "Jesus in Mark 7 teaches that it's possible to think that you're obeying and promoting God's will when you're just obeying and promoting the rules of a religious subculture. Have you ever done this, or seen it in another that you know?"
- Slowly read through the main points from the commentary of Mark 7 (listed below) as a reminder, and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want. Also read all or part of Mark 7 from the Bible.
- **Discovering Bible insights:** "Of all you read in Mark this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?"
- **Discerning God's message:** "As you pondered Mark this week, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?"
- **Responding to God's message:** "In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?"
- Remind people: "This week, please read chapter 8 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share: 1) What major insight into the Bible you discovered; 2) What one or two things you believe God said to you through it; and 3) How what he said impacts your life."

RELIGIOSITY VERSUS TRUE CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY (7:1-23)

- Different cultures and religions create different rituals and customs that people of that culture or religion are expected to obey.
- It is possible to do and say all the right things but to do it for the wrong reasons.
- It's possible to think that you're obeying and promoting God's will when you're just obeying and promoting the rules of a religious subculture.
- It's possible to find religious excuses to disobey the clear teachings of the Bible.
- It's possible to embrace a religiosity that never really penetrates and transforms the heart.
- Jesus subtly over-ruled the food laws that Moses had given Israel.
- You're a sinner in desperate need of a Saviour who can set you free from both the guilt and the power of your sin.

JESUS PERFORMS A MIRACLE FOR TWO DIFFERENT GENTILES (7:24-35)

- Jesus came first as Messiah to the Jews and then as Messiah to the world.
- Move the powerful arm of Christ in prayer.
- If you minister in healing power, be ready to adjust your ministry method as the Spirit leads and as the occasion necessitates.
- The recorded healings of Jesus in the gospels are amazingly encouraging to us today.

Week Four

- **Ice-breaker question:** "In Mark 8:31 following, Jesus radically challenged his disciples to give everything they had in their pursuit of him. Tell us one of the greatest challenges anybody ever gave you - and the answer does not need to be related to Jesus?"
- Slowly read through the main points from the commentary of Mark 8 as a reminder (listed below), and as an opportunity for new people to participate if they want. Also read all or part of Mark 8 from the Bible.
- **Discovering Bible insights:** "Of all you read in Mark this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?"
- **Discerning God's message:** "As you pondered Mark this week, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?"
- **Responding to God's message:** "In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?"
- "Well done for listening to God in Mark 5-8. We'll continue going through Mark on _____. While you wait, there are 65 other books waiting for us, so don't stop reading through them in your own devotions. Keep expecting God to speak to you through his Word. Also be sure to make use of the other commentaries available on www.commongroundchurch.co.za."

THE LOAVES AND THE YEAST (8:1-21)

- Care about the overall welfare of people in our world.

- Christ's track record of faithfulness towards us should cause us to be full of faith for his future faithfulness.
- Christ generally doesn't do miracles when there's an unwillingness to believe.
- Beware of having your view of God and what he's doing in the world tainted by the culture, rather than formed by Christ and the Scriptures.
- Jesus longs for us to discover who he was and is.

THE MIRACLE OF OPENED EYES (8:22-30)

- Sometimes Jesus heals progressively and not instantly.
- It takes a miracle for us to see who Jesus really was and is.
- Jesus didn't want his disciples, or anyone, to prematurely identify him as Messiah.

THE CROSS-CENTRED LIFE (8:31-9:1)

- Amazingly, Jesus the Great King is also Jesus the Suffering Servant.
- Be careful not to unknowingly undermine what God is doing.
- Christ calls you to give your life to him *totally*.
- The surest way to waste your life is to *not* follow Jesus.
- Fail to honour Christ and he will fail to honour you.
- The exaltation of Jesus has enabled us to experience a more powerful phase of his kingdom than was possible even during his earthly ministry.

Colour-code summary: the four main ways God speaks to us through the Gospels...

Blue = something about Jesus' uniqueness and Lordship that shows he is worthy of our devotion, trust and surrender

Green = something about Jesus' character or ministry that we can imitate

Red = something Jesus taught that we can understand or apply to our lives

Orange = insights we can apply based on the way various people responded to him