

The week that changed the world.

Mark 11-16

Growth Groups Material

(9 studies on Mark 11-16)

Feb-Apr 2026

LEADERS GUIDE

Version 2 (20260224): contains leaders notes for all studies

Teaching Schedule

In our gatherings we will work through an 11-part series, which includes the Easter Weekend:

Note: *This material contains 9 studies, corresponding to the first 9 sermons in the series. The remaining two weeks correspond to the Easter Weekend.*

29 Jan-1 Feb	Mark 11:1-11
5-8 Feb	Mark 11:12-25
12-15 Feb	Mark 11:27-12:12
19-22 Feb	Mark 12:13-44
26 Feb-1 Mar	Mark 13:1-37
5-8 Mar	Mark 14:1-31
12-15 Mar	Mark 14:32-52
19-22 Mar	Mark 14:53-72
26-29 Mar	Mark 15:1-15
3 Apr (Good Friday)	Mark 15:16-41
5 Apr (Easter Sunday)	Mark 15:42-16:8

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Additional Resources

We've put together some additional resources that might help you as you make your way through this series:

<https://www.jannalianglican.org.au/mark-11-16>



Introduction

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest and most action-packed of the four Gospels, offering a fast-paced account of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Likely written between A.D. 50–70, Mark's Gospel is believed to be based on the eyewitness testimony of the Apostle Peter and was recorded by Mark, who was a companion of both Peter and Paul.

Over the last two years we've worked our way through Mark book, from chapter 1 to chapter 10. Our various series' titles give us a sense of what we've learnt so far. Jesus is both *strong and kind* (chapters 1-4). Are we *seeing Jesus* clearly (chapters 5-9)? Will you *follow Jesus* in the way of sacrificial service (chapters 10-11)?

Mark 11–16 takes us into the final, climactic week of Jesus' life. *The week that truly changed the world*. From his royal entry into Jerusalem to his shocking death and victorious resurrection, these chapters reveal what kind of king Jesus really is. We see his authority challenged, his love poured out, his mission fulfilled, and his power displayed over sin and death. As you study these passages, you'll be invited not just to watch the story unfold, but to respond—who is Jesus to you, and how will you follow him?

As we approach Easter, when the Mark teaching series will end, our prayer is that you will be moved again by the sin-bearing death of our innocent saviour, for you. And that you will pray and take opportunity to share this message with others, so that they too might be saved.

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Note for leaders:

- Leaders' notes look like this (dot point, grey shading)
- Please refer group members to the QR code on page 2, if they would like to explore further resources.
- As usual, please don't feel compelled to do every question. I encourage you to tailor the study to suit your group.

Study 1 | Mark 11:1-11 (members book page 4)

Introduction

1. Have you ever been part of a big public celebration like a ticker-tape parade? Tell the group about it. What is the point of events like this?

- The aim of the **introduction/launch** question is for it to be fairly open-ended and easy to answer, without special knowledge. It's a good way to get people thinking and talking.
- In this case, the scene in Mark 11 is a little like the ticker-tape parades we see for sporting heroes after a victory. It's a big, public acknowledgement of an accomplishment or of someone important.

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 11:1-11.** How would you describe the scenes which took place as Jesus entered Jerusalem?

- This is an **observation** question. The aim of observation question is to get people reading the text for themselves and noticing what is written.
- Here members might come up with all kinds of ways to describe the scenes: loud, busy, exciting etc.

3. Mark is intent on telling us about Jesus' mode of transport – the colt? **Read Zechariah 9:9-10.** What is the significance of Jesus riding on the colt/donkey?

- This is a **comprehension** question (albeit with reference to another passage). The aim of a comprehension question is to move from observation to discerning the intended meaning of what the passage contains.
- In this case, Zechariah 9 would have been a well-known Messianic prophecy – pointing Jews to their coming King. We notice that Mark labours the colt/donkey fact. But why? It is to arouse in his readers mind, the link between Jesus and Zechariah 9. See also Gen 49:10-11.
- The Zechariah allusion tells us a few things: 1 – Yes, Jesus really is the king that was expected; and 2 – he comes in humility on a donkey – not a warhorse as a military conqueror might enter the city.

4. What do the shouts of the crowd tell us about Jesus and his mission?

- The crowds are identifying Jesus as the expected Son of David. Their language is drawn from Psalm 118:25-26. The laying down of clothes and branches is a mark of respect/deference.
- The word 'Hosanna', literally means 'save' in Hebrew. This word indicates Jesus' mission to save
- It's unclear whether, and indeed unlikely, that the crowds appreciate Jesus' mission to die. Their hopes are much more positive/ambitious.

Reflect and Apply

5. Jesus' deliberate orchestration (and knowledge) of getting the colt, teaches us that he was in complete control of his destiny. How does this give us confidence and comfort, knowing that Jesus was in control of his journey to the cross?

- This is more of an **interpretation/reflection** question. The aim of an interpretation/reflection question is to draw important truths from what has been read and discussed thus far.
- Here, a possible answer to the question might be that Jesus control of things shows that he willingly went to the cross. He didn't try to avoid his fate, but deliberately sought it out. This comforts us because Jesus' willingness to die demonstrates his love for us.

6. The crowds recognized Jesus as a King and laid their clothes down on the path to be trampled on? What are some ways in our lives that we could demonstrate a similar level of worship and submission to Jesus?

- This is an **application** question. The aim of an application question is to get into more concrete belief or behaviour implications that emerge from the truths discovered.
- Here, if Jesus really is the promised King of the Old Testament – we ought to revere and worship him with the same gusto as the crowds did during this scene. What it will look like for us, now, will be different though. Some ideas about what it might look like now could include: telling others about Jesus (praising him publicly), serving sacrificially. The group might have other ideas.

7. Verses 9 and 10 convey a real sense of joy at the coming of King Jesus. Do you feel joy when you contemplate the salvation Jesus has won for us? How can we cultivate this kind of joy?

- This is an **application** question. The aim of an application question to get into more concrete belief or behaviour implications that emerge from the truths discovered.
- The intended take home point from this question is that we will feel joy as we consider Jesus. Often though, our sense of joy in salvation wavers. Come up with some ideas about how we can cultivate joy. Some answers might include, reflecting more often on God's goodness to us (as we read the Bible), praying – asking God to fill us with joy. What other strategies can you come up with?

- **We recommend you conclude all studies by praying in light of what you have discussed/learnt, before moving onto other prayer (if praying at the end of your session)**

Study 2 | Mark 11:12-25 (members book page 6)

Introduction

1. Is it right and good for Jesus to lose his temper? Why or why not? Discuss.

- The aim of the **introduction/launch** question is for it to be fairly open-ended and easy to answer, without special knowledge. It's a good way to get people thinking and talking.
- In these scenes we see Jesus get angry at what is happening in the temple courtyards. For some, this raises questions about the validity of Jesus getting angry. Isn't anger always bad? Beginning with the concept of Jesus getting angry will help us later on, as we explore why Jesus gets angry

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 11:12-26.** In his style of writing, Mark is known for using a 'sandwich structure' – linking two ideas together (bread-filling-bread). What is the bread in this section? What is the filling? How might they be related?

- This is an **observation** question. The aim of observation question is to get people reading the text for themselves and noticing what is written.
- The 'Markan Sandwich' is a well-known feature of this gospel. You will see it often if you look for it (e.g. in Mark 5, Jesus' interactions with Jairus and his dying daughter are sandwiched around his interaction with the bleeding woman. Mark uses both characters to teach us about faith). Usual in a 'Markan Sandwich' the filling (middle scene) helps shed light on the bread (outer scenes).
- Here the bread is Jesus' cursing of the fig tree (verses 12-14, then 20-21). The filling is Jesus cleansing the temple.
- They are related insofar as the fig tree is intended to be a symbol for the corrupt leadership of Israel – especially those in Jerusalem. It has not produced the fruit of righteous living and obedience to God's ways. Therefore, God will judge Israel and Jerusalem just as Jesus cursed the fig tree.

3. How is the condition of the fig tree a picture of the spiritual condition of the temple. How is the fate of the fig tree a picture of the final end of the temple?

- This is more of an **interpretation/reflection** question. The aim of an interpretation/reflection question is to draw important truths from what has been read and discussed thus far.
- See the last dot point in notes above.

4. **Read Isaiah 56:6-7 and Jeremiah 7:11.** What was the Jewish temple meant to be like? What had gone wrong?

- This is a **comprehension** question (albeit with reference to another passage). The aim of a comprehension question is to move from observation to discerning the intended meaning of what the passage contains.
- These are the verses Jesus quotes in his comments in the temple.
- The temple was meant to be a place where people of all nations (but especially the Jews) could access God. It was his special dwelling place for the whole earth.
- Instead of people accessing God, however, they were being taken advantage of by God's own people. There had been a legitimate need to purchase animals to make sacrifices, or exchange foreign currency in order to make an offering and pay temple taxes. However, scrupulous people were ripping off their captive customers, turning access to God into a business

5. **Read verses 21-25 again.** Is Jesus really saying that we'll be given anything we pray for? What might Jesus be saying, given his recent judgment against the temple?

- This is a tricky section to understand. Upon first reading, Jesus says some things which are hard to follow (or at least hard to believe)
- The context is especially helpful here. Perhaps Peter has joined the dots about the fig tree representing the temple and he's very concerned that the temple will be destroyed.
- The context of the temple being judged and destroyed though unlocks things. Jesus wants to assure us that prayer to God, indeed relationship with God at all, will still work, even if it's not done in the temple. This would have been a shocking idea to Jews – hence Jesus' hyperbolic language.
- The new temple (the church, founded on Jesus) will be marked by faith and forgiveness.
- Ofcourse, we must not take verse 24 out of context of the whole Bible, and say that God will give us anything we ask for. Clearly that is not true. Jesus is really just making the radical point that faith is now the platform upon which we approach God – not the ceremonies and rituals of the temple.

Reflect and Apply

6. In what ways can the church today fail to fulfil our role as ‘God’s temple’? What do we Christians need to do to enable all nations to find forgiveness and meet with God?

- This is an **application** question. The aim of an application question to get into more concrete belief or behaviour implications that emerge from the truths discovered.
- In many ways, the New Testament church (i.e. us) now takes up the role initially given to Israel – to bring the nations to God.
- The obvious answer to this question to be active and bold in sharing the gospel
- But to learn from Mark 11, we could also say that we must not mistreat or take advantage of people seeking God. Or create any unnecessary barriers that make it difficult for people to find God.

7. Do you think God remains concerned with the disconnect between Christians who do the right religious things but don’t bear fruit in their living? How should we respond if we notice that inconsistency in our own lives?

- Yes he is!
- We see this theme come up time and time again: in the sermon on the mount (e.g. Matt 6:1), James 1:22-25, the letters in Rev 2-3.
- Most of us will feel somewhat inconsistent at this point – we all fall into sin again and again. The right response is to continue the same way we began following Jesus: faith and repentance. Faith in Jesus that his cross is sufficient, not lingering too long in guilt (although grieving our sin is appropriate). Repentance means turning from our sin and seeking to live a more integrated life of godliness.
- We can pray for God to change us, encourage and be accountable to one another etc.

8. In what ways could the message of verses 21-25 be considered good news for us?

- This question links back to verse 5. It’s good news in that access to God is no longer mediated through particular places, important people and special rituals. We can know God through his Spirit, and pray to him whenever and wherever we want.

Study 3 | Mark 11:27-12:12 (members book page 8)

Introduction

1. What attributes make a leader worthy of following?

- The aim of the **introduction/launch** question is for it to be fairly open-ended and easy to answer, without special knowledge. It's a good way to get people thinking and talking.
- As Mark 11-16 unfolds we're seeing more and more conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Whereas Jesus demonstrates patience, wisdom and ultimately self-denial in his death, the Jewish leaders are corrupt and trying to find a way to kill Jesus. This question invites us to think about leaders more generally so that we can see how Jesus is a great leader for us (as opposed to the Jewish leaders).

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 11:27-33.** Recall the response of the Jewish leaders to the scene in the temple (Mark 11:18). What do you think is behind the approach to questioning Jesus?

- This is an **observation** question. The aim of observation question is to get people reading the text for themselves and noticing what is written.
- By this stage of the story, the leaders are looking for a way to execute Jesus. Later, in 12:13 Mark is clear- they are looking to trap Jesus in his words. Here, Mark isn't as clear, but we can read between the lines. The Jewish leaders are looking for Jesus to say something illegal.

3. What impresses you about Jesus' response?

- This is more of an **interpretation/reflection** question. The aim of an interpretation/reflection question is to draw important truths from what has been read and discussed thus far.
- This question gives us a chance to slow down and appreciate the wisdom in Jesus' approach.

4. **Read Mark 12:1-12.** Who do the different characters/story elements represent in reality (vineyard owner, vineyard, tenant farmers, servants, son). What point is Jesus making by speaking this parable?

- This is a **comprehension** question. The aim of a comprehension question is to move from observation to discerning the intended meaning of what the passage contains.
- This is a parable of judgment against the Jewish leaders who are questioning Jesus. The vineyard owner is God. The vineyard itself probably represents the nation of Israel. The tenant farmers are the Jewish leaders (tasked with leading God's people in obedience and worship of God – but failing). The servants likely refer to the Old Testament prophets who were sent by God to warn the Israelites to uphold their side of the covenant (obey the law, avoid idols etc.). The son is Jesus.
- Note the image of a vineyard to describe Israel can be found in Isaiah 5:1-7.
- The point Jesus is making is to expose the evil of the Jewish leaders rejecting the very representative of the God whom they claim to serve. God is highly offended by their treatment of Jesus and he will judge them for it.

5. What could be the real life meaning of the comment at the end of the parable – “He will...give the vineyard to others.”

- This is more of an **interpretation/reflection** question. The aim of an interpretation/reflection question is to draw important truths from what has been read and discussed thus far.
- This reference could be to the Gentiles – non-Jews who will also be saved through Jesus, after he is rejected and killed by his own countrymen.

Reflect and Apply

6. Does this parable explain the behaviour of Israel and it's leaders towards God, or the behaviour of humanity at large?

- This is an **application** question. The aim of an application question to get into more concrete belief or behaviour implications that emerge from the truths discovered.
- See notes under question 7.

7. How does this parable help us appreciate the absolute unreasonableness, and evil of rejecting Jesus?

- The purpose of both this question and the last is to see the unreasonableness, and evil of all rejection of God. Just as he planted Israel in the promised land and therefore deserved the fruit of righteous living/worship in return, so too the same could be said of all creation at large. The call to love, trust and worship God, is made to all creatures, based on God's creative goodness to us in the first instance. When we reject him, and his messengers, it's completely wicked and makes no sense whatsoever.
- Rejecting Jesus, who is God in the flesh and the pinnacle of God's revelation towards humanity is the height of wickedness.

8. What is the end result for anyone that opposes Jesus?

- This a start and unmistakable truth – anyone who opposes Jesus will face God's judgment. In fact, they remain under God's judgment (where they were already situated because of their sin)
- This reality humbles us, and ought to move us to pray and seek the salvation of lost people we know. Refer to the Lifeboat list page later in this booklet. It would be great to make it a habit in your group to be continually referring to, and praying for people on our Lifeboat lists.

Study 4 | Mark 12:13-44 (members book page 11)

Introduction

1. Reflect on the last few weeks of talks/studies. Do you have a “one thing” that you have recorded somewhere and can share. Either way, share one thing that has stood out to you from chapters 11-12 so far?

- The aim of the **introduction/launch** question is for it to be fairly open-ended and easy to answer, without special knowledge. It’s a good way to get people thinking and talking.
- There is no specific theme intended to be raised by this question. Rather, it’s a chance to take stock of what has been covered so far. It’s also a strategy to encourage people to be doing ‘your one thing’ in our gatherings and then sharing what their ‘one thing’ is with others.

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 12:13-37.** There are four scenes here, following a similar pattern. Can you identify for each scene:

- a. Those asking the question;
- b. The question itself; and
- c. Jesus’ answer

- This is an **observation** question. The aim of observation question is to get people reading the text for themselves and noticing what is written.
- Mark’s structure exposes a clear pattern of Jesus being questioned by Jewish leaders. In fact, this pattern started back in 11:27, prior to the parable of the tenants (which you might recall was an indictment of the Jewish leaders for rejecting Jesus).
- Here, I won’t detail each answer as it’s fairly straightforward observation.
- You might like to notice differences between each scene. The scribe in verses 28-34, for example seems more sincere than the earlier groups. It may be that he is being held up as a positive example, in contrast to the earlier questioners.

3. Do you notice any important differences between each scene?

- You might like to notice differences between each scene. The scribe in verses 28-34, for example seems more sincere than the earlier groups. It may be that he is being held up as a positive example, in contrast to the earlier questioners.

4. **Read Mark 12:38-44.** Who is being contrasted in these two passages? What do you think Mark wants his readers to take away from this contrast?

- The contrast here is between the corrupt scribes (Jewish religious leaders) and the poor widow.
- There could be two, related take away points here:
 - First, heed the warning not to treat God like the scribes did – hypocrisy, looking for praise, but no real godliness.
 - Second, contrary to the scribes the call to Jesus followers is to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, strength. The single (good) scribe in verses 28-34 identified this. This will involve much more than visible religious activity (like temple sacrifices back then). The widow lives this truth out.

Reflect and Apply

5. Would you say that the love of religious titles or positions, without any real love for God, remains a problem today? Where do we see it?

- This is an **application** question. The aim of an application question to get into more concrete belief or behaviour implications that emerge from the truths discovered.
- The answer here is yes. Have a think about where we see it. Maybe in the fancy, pompous ceremonies surrounding the British Monarchy (recent royal weddings and coronations come to mind). Maybe it's in some of the big Catholic masses.
- Maybe it's in our own church where we know of people who love to be seen at church on Sunday, but you know they're not 'real' Christians who trust Jesus and pursue godliness.
- Care is needed here that we don't simply end up judging other people and their hypocrisy and relishing it!

6. What would the signs in our lives be, if like the scribes we did religious things in order to be seen and praised?

- This question complements question 5 in a very important way. We must examine ourselves to ensure we're not hypocrites like the scribes Jesus condemns.
- Brainstorm what the signs might be. Some signs could include
 - Only serving in upfront or visible ways (because we like to be recognized), and not serving where the work is less visible, and less recognition.

- Actively volunteering information to others about what we're doing in church, or how often we come, or our giving etc
- Being a godly person at church, but exhibiting different behaviour in private

7. What might it look like for us to follow the example of the widow in verses 41-44?

- Whereas questions 5 and 6 were negative in their approach (e.g. avoid this or that), this question is framed positively. What would a life in which we're fully devoted to God look like. Brainstorm some possibilities.

Study 5 | Mark 13:1-37 (members book page 13)

Introduction

1. What examples do you see today of people looking for signs to correlate with God's word? What is tempting about doing this?

- The aim of the **introduction/launch** question is for it to be fairly open-ended and easy to answer, without special knowledge. It's a good way to get people thinking and talking.
- Invite the group to share any examples of people being obsessed with signs. Often global conflicts or events in the Middle-East are considered signs by some people.
- It's tempting for us for two reasons. First, books like Revelation contain detailed prophecies about things which seems to be real events. We want to read and interpret these prophecies because they come from God's Word and carry authority. Second, being able to discern a sign means we have clarity about what God is doing in the world, and where he is up to in his timetable for history. We all love clarity rather than confusion and certainty rather than doubt.
- **General comment:** this chapter is notoriously difficult and hard to follow. Don't be troubled if you find it tricky.
 - It is an example of the apocalyptic genre (also seen in OT Prophets, Revelation etc.). The apocalyptic genre often uses vivid imagery, of wars, troubles etc. to convey a message of perseverance to oppressed believers.
 - For thorough preparation consult the Dig Deeper book excerpt on the series webpage.

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 13:1-37.** What future troubles or deceptions are the disciples warned about??

- The aim here is to read the passage carefully and observe what is being said. Don't try to interpret the events being referred to just yet.
- Some troubles the disciples were to expect include:
 - Deceptive – false Christs (v5-6)
 - Wars, natural disasters (v7-8)
 - Persecution for being Christian (v9-13)
 - False messiahs/false prophets (v21-23)
- The second part of this question is more reflective.

3. Amongst scholars there are different views about what future event is being referred to by Jesus in this chapter. The main options are:
- a. the death and resurrection of Jesus;
 - b. the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Romans in AD70; or
 - c. the second coming of Jesus.

Discuss which of these three options seems the best way to understand the passage? What can you point to in the passage that supports your argument.

- This will feel like a confusing exercise.
- The most common view is that the big event in view here is the destruction of the Jewish temple by the Romans. The phrase “abomination of desolation” is taken from Daniel 9:27, 11:31 where it refers to the desecration of the temple. In AD70 the Romans captured and burnt the Temple. The Roman general Titus entered the Holy of Holies thus desecrating it since only the High Priest was meant to enter this area.
- Other key verses:
 - Verses 24-25 (alluding to Isaiah 13:10 & 34:4) feel like end of the world type stuff.
 - Verse 26 and 27 (alluding to Daniel 7:13-14) complicates things a little. When will the Son of Man be seen in his glory – at his second coming. When he is resurrected and ascended after his death?
 - Verse 30 says these things will not happen before the current generation dies?

4. Should Christians of our own generation expect a hard time for being followers of Jesus? What is the message of this chapter for us?

- The point of this question is to try to lift our thinking out of the puzzling details of Jesus’ words and think about what we ought to take away.
- Yes, Christians ought to expect some of the troubles described in this chapter. Though it may not be because of this particular chapter that this is the case. There are other, more general warnings of this nature issued to Christian (e.g. John 15:18-20, 1 Thess 3:2-4)
- In verses 32-37 we get the most important part for us. We don’t know with certainty the timing of all these things, or of Jesus return. The key for the disciples and for all Christians is to be alert, ready for Jesus return. This will mean

not succumbing to the temptation to give up despite trials and not being led astray by false teachers.

Reflect and Apply

5. When the days of tribulation come (verse 18) it must have felt like/will feel like God is not in control of things. What lesson does this chapter give us when we feel that God is not in control?

- Comfort can be gleaned from the fact that despite appearances, God remains in control of history.
- In fact, according to Rev 9:20-21 God uses hard judgment type events to invite repentance.

6. Jesus applies what he has been saying for us in verses 32-37. How should we prepare for the coming of Christ?

- This question is building on question 4. What does it look like for us to remain alert?

7. How can we remain content in our (lack of) understanding – not knowing all the answers? For example, in this case, it's hard to be precise about what events are being described by Jesus.

- This is a hard-earned but wonderful mindset to develop. If we can continue trusting God with history, with our lives, even when things go bad, then our faith is strong! And God's promises to us mean he is worthy of that level of trust.
- The main strategy is to recall that our eternal destiny is secure if we are connected to Christ. Romans 8:28-39 contains great truths to reflect on:
 - In God's sovereignty, all things are working together for our good;
 - No matter what happens, nothing can separate us from God's love for us in Christ Jesus.

Study 6 | Mark 14:1-31 (members book page 15)

Introduction

1. Imagine you knew the time and circumstances of your death? What would you do with that information? How would you feel?

- The aim of the **introduction/launch** question is for it to be fairly open-ended and easy to answer, without special knowledge. It's a good way to get people thinking and talking.
- This particular question is a bit morbid, but as we'll see in this passage Jesus knows and is prepared for his impending death. Whereas we might feel petrified or try to get out of death – Jesus is resolved to face it, because it is the heart of his mission.

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 14:1-31.** List all the different characters (or groups of characters). How should we assess each of them, and their response to Jesus?

- This is an observation question. The aim of observation question is to get people reading the text for themselves and noticing what is written.
- The aim here is simply to be reading through this section carefully, noticing what's happening. Listing the characters and noticing their response is a way of focusing our attention on the passage. As the identity and mission of Jesus, Mark is showcasing different types of responses so that the reader will ask themselves – “What is my response to Jesus?”
- Chief priests/Scribes
 - Opposed to Jesus and want to arrest and kill him. Definitely the wrong response
- The woman with perfume
 - There is something right about expressing extravagant adoration for Jesus. Jesus endorses her attitude.
- The crowd in Bethany, at Simon's house
 - Have they misunderstood how important Jesus is – hence their indignation re the perfume?
- Judas
 - Opposed to Jesus and want to arrest and kill him. Definitely the wrong response
- The disciples (especially Peter)

- Committed and submissive – but perhaps overconfident that they would never abandon Jesus?

3. What does Jesus already know about his death? List all the aspects of his death (how it comes about, it's meaning etc.) that Jesus already understands. What is unusual about the way he handles this knowledge?

- First – what's unusual is that Jesus is calm and resolved in the face of his death. He knows it's going to happen. Most of us would be terrified or frantically trying to change things.
- As for the details:
 - Verse 7-8. Jesus knows he will die, and that he will be anointed with oils when buried (the normal custom at the time)
 - Verse 14 – Jesus knows that one of the disciples will betray him, in accordance with what is written. The Scriptures being referred to could be a general reference to sections like Isaiah 53 – where the suffering servant suffers and dies. There are no specific verses referring to the Son of Man figure suffering. See also Ps 41:9 and Ps 55:12-14 which the betrayal of a friend.
 - Verses 22-25 – Jesus likens his own body and blood to the bread and wine of the Passover meal. The Passover meal specifically recalls the events of the Exodus where a lamb was sacrificed, and it's blood put on the doorposts of the Israelites as a sign of divine protection from judgement. Jesus is saying that his death is like a new passover.
 - Verses 27-31 – Jesus knows that as his death approaches his friends will abandon him.

Reflect and Apply

4. Should we be more extravagant in our worship of Jesus, like the woman in Bethany. How could we do this?

- The answer is probably yes, but it's a question of what this means for us now.
 - According to Jesus words in verse 7, it might mean being generous to the poor and others in our life who are needy.
 - More generally, it could mean we make meaningful, sacrificial contributions to the work of the gospel – sparing no expense. Brainstorm other possible ways of emulating this woman in our own context.

- It's worth asking ourselves whether we feel adequately moved by the death of Jesus – like this woman. Or are we so familiar with it that that we've become apathetic about it and the significance of it is lost on us.

5. How does Jesus' knowledge of his impending death demonstrate his love for us?

- The resolve of Jesus to go the cross for us is incredible. He chose to die. It was planned. His life wasn't taken from him against his will. This level of commitment to us is astonishing.
- Would we ever consider enduring such suffering for another person?

6. What is the significance of the Passover for understanding the meaning of Jesus death?

- You may like to read over Exodus 12, to remind yourself about the Passover.
- In short, the Passover lamb and it's blood was God's ordained means of safety amidst his judgement against Egypt. God's angel of death would, quite literally, *pass over* the houses of the Jews whose doors we're marked with blood.
- By identifying the meal as 'my body' Jesus is saying his death will be the means by which his people will find refuge from God's judgment.

Study 7 | Mark 14:32-52 (members book page 18)

Introduction

1. Reflect on the last few weeks of talks/studies. Do you have a “one thing” that you have recorded somewhere and can share. Either way, share one thing that has stood out to you from chapters 13-14 so far?

- The aim of the **introduction/launch** question is for it to be fairly open-ended and easy to answer, without special knowledge. It’s a good way to get people thinking and talking.
- This question doesn’t relate especially to the current study, but rather serves as an opportunity to take stock of the series so far.

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 14:32-42.** What contrast is presented between Jesus and the disciples. What might the theological significance of this be, as Jesus approaches the cross?

- Mark seems intent on showing the contrast between Jesus’ diligence and resolve versus the disciples’ weakness and unreliability. This is presented through the theme of ‘staying awake’. First Jesus instructs them to stay awake (v34). Then on three occasions, in between his prayers, Jesus returns to the disciples to find them asleep (v37, 40, 41).
- Jesus, by contrast is awake and praying eagerly to the Father about his impending death.
- Verse 38 helps us understand the symbolism of sleep/being awake. Being awake means being alert to God and resisting temptation, following through in obedience. Sleep, on the other hand, symbolizes the weakness of the flesh, and failing to resist temptation.
- Theologically speaking, the whole contrast reminds us that Jesus is the only perfect human, enabled by God to fully-resist sin, and follow through in obedience. Though human, Jesus’ flesh is not corrupted by sin like us. Only he is qualified to accomplish God’s saving mission.

3. How does Jesus’ prayer to the Father demonstrate his absolute trust?

- The epitome of trust is committing ourselves to God’s will and continuing to obey Him in a given circumstance, when we know the path ahead of us is uncertain or difficult.

- This is so hard to do. But the more we trust God and obey him, even if it will seemingly lead to suffering, the more mature our faith us. It doesn't mean that path is easy.

4. Read Mark 14:43-52. The average person would probably resist arrest. Why does Jesus submit to his arrest?

- In verse 49 – Jesus says his arrest is about the Scripture being fulfilled.
- There is no specific prophecy which speaks directly of the Messiah being arrested, but there are other general prophecies about being rejected (See e.g. Isaiah 53:7-8, Ps 31:13).

Reflect and Apply

5. Are there situations in your life where you could/ought to be praying to God: “not what I will, but what you will”? What are they? Share with the group if you are comfortable doing so. In other words – are there hard things you are being called to endure, in order to obey God?

- This is a chance to be vulnerable and share current circumstances in our lives in which we're being called to trust God. Allow some time for reflection before moving onto the next question. It may not be obvious to people if they are in a situation like this, or if they are, whether they are comfortable to share it.

6. How does Jesus' resolve to go the cross, despite his trepidation, demonstrate his love for us? His love for God the Father?

- For open discussion. See noted under question 5 in the last study. The prayers and vivid emotion Jesus displays in verses 32-42 ought to move us. Jesus prayed and wrestled with God's will, so that he could follow through on his mission to obey the Father by going to the cross.
- Jesus' desire to perform that Father's will and his love for us go together. They are united in purpose. In other words, the Father's will that Jesus die, is because of the love of God (both Father and Son) for fallen humanity.
- It can be easy to become unmoved by Jesus willingness to go to the cross because we hear it so often, and because we're inclined to think of Jesus in his divine nature – he is God. But this passage shows us Jesus in his humanity. Anxious and terrified by death. We can relate to that. Jesus was indeed fully human.

7. The behaviour of the man in verse 51 calls us to consider how we might have responded to Jesus' arrest if we were present? What do you think you would have done? Why?

- This is quite an odd addition, but worth considering. We don't know who is being referred to here. But it highlights again that all those who were following Jesus abandoned him, as he had said would happen earlier that evening (Mark 14:27)
- What would we have done? Asking this question may be Mark's intended response, and the rationale behind leaving the figure unidentified.
- Are we more concerned for our own self-preservation than standing with Jesus when the world becomes hostile?

Study 8 | Mark 14:53-72 (members book page 20)

Introduction

1. Have you ever publicly denied being a follower of Jesus, or twisted the truth about your faith? If you are willing, share with the group the circumstances of this occasion and how you felt about it afterwards.

- The aim of the **introduction/launch** question is for it to be fairly open-ended and easy to answer, without special knowledge. It's a good way to get people thinking and talking.
- Invite the group to share any examples from their own lives. They may not be examples of explicit denial of Jesus. It may be subtle decisions designed to keep silent about being a Christian. It will be important to respond suitable and not shame people for sharing – they may still be carrying guilt.
- The purpose of this question is to see parallels with Peter, who publicly denies Jesus three times.

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 14:53-65.** What is the aim of the of the assorted Jewish authorities in this scene?

- This is an observation question, aiming to get our group members reading the text closely.
- Verse 55 tells us that the authorities are looking for ways to find Jesus guilty of a crime, so they can put him to death.

3. What question is put to Jesus in verse 61? What is Jesus' response?

- Jesus is asked directly of he is the Messiah.
- Note, in the original language, the words of the high priest are in the grammatical form of a statement, not a question: e.g. "you are the Messiah, son of the blessed one...*aren't you*"

4. Jesus' response to this question, "I am", in verse 62, seems familiar and normal to us. Jesus is explicitly claiming to be the Son of God! What is the response from the Jewish leaders to this claim? Why?

- This is an incredible clear and unambiguous claim. In the context (i.e. Jesus knowing the consequences of such a claim) we see Jesus in total control of his destiny here. Earlier Jesus was remaining silent (v61). But now he's clear.
- Jesus' comments in verse 62 draw from Daniel 7:13 and Psalm 110:1.
- The response from the Jewish leaders is unsurprising – they accuse Jesus of blasphemy and sentence him to death.
- The mistreatment of 14:65 is vivid, albeit brief in description. Mark sees Jesus as the *suffering servant* of Isaiah – so there are allusions to key verses in the servant songs (see Isaiah 50:6, 53:3)
- Even though readers of Mark's gospel ought to have recognized Jesus as God's son (as they've read), the idea is highly offensive to the Jewish leaders. They cannot fathom the idea of a regular human being claiming to be God.
- Even if the idea of a Messiah figure coming in the flesh was known to them, the leaders could not/did not appreciate that He would not fit their preconceived expectations.

5. **Read Mark 14:66-72.** Peter's denial returns us to the theme of the disciple's failures to resist temptation (see Mark 14:38). What might the theological significance of this be, as Jesus approaches the cross?

- Peter's denial of Jesus fulfills Jesus prediction in 14:30, and builds on the theme of the disciples weakness in 14:38.
- Similar to the scenes in Gethsemane, we're reminded that even the most devoted follower of Jesus, who was close to him (Peter), is guilty of failure. Only Jesus is the perfect human, who can go to the cross.
- There's great comfort in the knowledge Jesus knew Peter's failures and still went to the cross for him. After Jesus resurrection, Peter is restored (see John 21, for example). Like Peter, we have moments we regret, whether it's hiding our Christian faith, or doing the kinds of things that we imagine no Christian would ever do. We may think we're beyond forgiveness. BUT, if Peter can be forgiven, so can we.

Reflect and Apply

6. Skeptics sometimes say that Jesus never claimed to be divine, and that Christians have misunderstood him. How does this passage correct that myth?

- Jesus comments in v62 are pretty clear!

7. Jesus was willing to speak the truth here, despite the serious costs that would follow. Peter does not? Are there issues or situations in your life which tempt you to withhold the truth (or lie) because the prospective costs? How does Jesus' example train us to be truthful?

- Open for discussion. This will revisit the ideas brought up into the introduction.
- In addition to returning to personal examples, work on articulating the lesson to take away here. It might be something like that – *following Jesus means we tell the truth, even if it costs us*

Study 9 | Mark 15:1-15 (members book page 22)

Introduction

1. Reflect on the last few studies covering chapter 14. What makes Jesus attractive in these scenes?

- Invite the group for their own reflections.
- A few possibilities include
 - The way in which Jesus was in control of his destiny
 - Jesus, humble, submissive approach to his death – he didn't try to resist it because he knew that it was necessary for saving us
 - Jesus' resolve in the garden of Gethsemene to obey the Father and follow through with his mission to die

Read and Discuss

2. **Read Mark 15:1-5.** What is Pilate so surprised about in these verses?

- Pilate was surprised that Jesus did not seek to defend himself, or answer his accusations.

3. How would you describe Jesus' manner, in response to the accusations and questions he faced?

- What words come to mind for the group? Humble. Passive. Submissive. Calm.
- Again, Mark probably wants his readers to think of the suffering servant figure of Isaiah. See Isaiah 53:7 – "*he did not open his mouth*"

4. **Read Mark 15:6-15.** What does Mark reveal about Pilate's concerns around Jesus' execution? What do you think Mark is trying to show us?

- Pilate remained unconvinced of Jesus' guilt. Mark wants us to see Jesus' *innocence* (see Isaiah 53:9 – no violence, no deceit).
- The invitation to release Barabbas, serves to highlight this truth – Jesus was innocent and undeserving of death (in contrast to Barabbas).

Reflect and Apply

5. Throughout his arrest and trial, Jesus suffers unimaginable injustice. He is innocent of wrongdoing yet sentenced to death. Have you been the victim of injustice, unfair accusations etc. What is your natural reaction? How could we emulate Jesus' example?

- Responding graciously in the face of injustice is one of the hardest things to do. It can be very frustrating. Our natural reaction is to fight back, seek to correct wrong impressions, take revenge etc.
- Jesus gives us an example to follow here – graciousness and calmness.
- Peter elaborates on this in 1 Peter 2:18-25. The key to this posture is to trust that God sees all, and will put things right in the end – v 23 – he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly.

6. The calls of the crowd to have the guilty Barabbas released and Jesus crucified are simply absurd! How does this moment exemplify all rejection of God and all human sin?

- There's a few ways we could answer this.
- On the one hand, all rejection of God is irrational. It doesn't make sense. It is an absurd, silly thing to do dethrone God, and do the very things that he calls us not to do. It's absurd because God is the creator and King of this world. We are accountable to him AND, crucially, God's instruction is for our good.
- Another angle might be to see the social momentum that surrounds the calls for Barabbas release. The group gets going and, led by the priests, call for the release of the guilty man. So often our sinful thoughts/behaviours flourish when we go along with the people around us and what they are doing. We remain responsible, but we're influenced by those around us.

7. What theological truths does the exchange of Jesus with Barabbas convey to us so vividly?

- This is an incredible, real-life example of the exchange that takes place for us at the cross.
- Jesus, though righteous, and innocent, died for us – unrighteous and guilty (see Romans 5:8, 1 Peter 3:18).

8. Take a moment to reflect on our journey through Mark 11-16. What's one thing that has stood out to you, or impacted you in some way. Tell the group about it.

- Allow some time to reflect on the series as a whole. What are some of the big take away points for the group?

Praying for our *Life boat lists* (members book page 24)

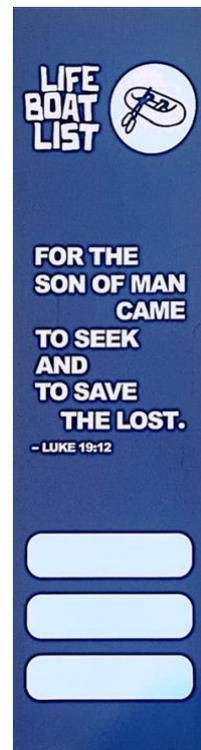


We know that everyone's greatest need in life is to be reconciled with God through Jesus so that their sins can be forgiven. We want lost people to be saved, and know the eternal hope of salvation, rather than perish under God's judgment.

A tool we use to help us pray regularly is our *life boat list*. These are bookmarks upon which we can list three people that we're deliberately praying for and actively working towards sharing Jesus with.

In our groups, it would be excellent to share with each other who is on our life boat lists, and pray together for each of these people, and our efforts to reach them.

You might like to use the next two pages to record the name of the people you are praying for.



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