

## Encountering Jesus through the Gospel of Mark

### Week 12: Why Dying Now Is Better Than Dying Later

Hi Leaders!

We are into the week leading up to Good Friday and Easter Sunday. I hope that you are taking some time to prepare your hearts for this key weekend in our church celebrations. Try to spend some extra time with God in your day, meditate on Jesus' sacrifice for you and for the world, read through some of the Passion narratives in the gospels, or share a meal with some believing friends and pray for one another. How will you prepare your heart to celebrate the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ?

#### I. Catch Up (15 mins)

- Play a game, have fun, share some food, or catch up together.

#### II. Dig In

- Seek Understanding
  - Read Mark 8:34-38 together
    - What does Jesus mean by "deny yourself"?
    - What were crosses used for in this time?
      - What does it mean to take up our cross then?
    - We don't just deny ourselves, or take up our crosses, but we FOLLOW JESUS.
      - What does it look like to follow Jesus this week in your current life situation?
    - "For whoever would save their lives will lose them..."
      - What does it mean to try to "save" our own lives?
    - "...and whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel, will save it."
      - What might it look like to lose our lives for Jesus and Gospel?
      - What does it mean that our lives will be 'saved' if we do this?
    - "What good is it to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?"
      - This rhetorical question speaks of the foolishness of storing up for ourselves in this life, while neglecting to prepare for the next. What pursuits in this world most tempt you?
    - Bonhoeffer wrote, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." (He wrote this while leading a men's seminary, we can expand the language to include both males and females).
      - What do you think of this statement having read these verses in Mark? Discuss.
- Apply

### Marked

- Try to describe what you've understood "following Jesus" to mean to this point in your life?
  - Does it come as a shock at all to learn that Jesus' call to his disciples is to follow him into self-denial and ultimately death? (...and ultimately LIFE).
  - Give an example of how you've experienced death-to-self in following Christ so far?
  - What are some ways you try to "save" yourself or seek to "gain the world"?
  - What does self-denial/taking up your cross look like in your interior life right now? (sin, thought patterns, fears, etc.)
  - What does self-denial/taking up your cross look like in your relationships and current lifestyle? (how you parent? downsizing home? A more inclusive home/table? Spending more time with people on the fringes of our society?)
  - What will denying ourselves and following Jesus now, lead to in the future?
    - Try to describe some of the future hope we have in Christ.
- Pray
    - Read Paul's description of self-denial and taking up his cross in order to discover the life of Christ:
      - But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.
    - Pray for God's help in the areas of self-denial you discussed in your personal and social lives?
      - *Leader's Note: If there are some who have shared things that may require some practical efforts to change their circumstance or environments, it may be good to have some follow up conversations in private asking those people, "In light of what you shared, do you think there are any practical steps you can make in cooperation with God in that area of your life?"*
- Upcoming Events!
    - **Renewal Weekend: June 15-16<sup>th</sup>**. Please announce to your Small Group and encourage everyone to come. Pastor Scott has asked us to Save The Date as this will be a whole church event aiming to draw near to God together in the midst of our teaching series on the Holy Spirit. More information to come!