



# Meet Jesus Gospel of Mark Growth Group Studies

Trinity Church Adelaide  
Bible Study Series 2026

## **Meet Jesus : The Gospel of Mark**

The Gospel according to Mark literally means “the good news/proclamation according to Mark.” Mark’s Gospel was the first full account of Jesus’ life to be put together in written form, and influenced each of the other Gospel accounts in what they included (hence the similarities to Matthew and Luke) as well as what they chose not to include (John, who in John 21:25 acknowledges that Jesus did many other signs and wonders besides what he has included in his Gospel). Mark’s Gospel is written so that we might confess that Jesus is the Christ - as Peter does in Mark 8:29 - and that he is the Son of God - as the Centurion does in Mark 15:39 - and realise that this meant Jesus had to die and rise to life again for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:1, 8:27-33, 14:61-62). This is Mark’s chief reason for writing his Gospel: that we might share this confession and worship Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God.

In 2025 our studies covered Mark 1-10 (following the Trinity Church Adelaide sermon series), and so these studies continue from Mark 11-16. From a broad, sweeping coverage of Jesus’ ministry in Mark 1-10, we change focus and Mark dedicates nearly 40% of his gospel space to one week of Jesus’ life - from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday. From his triumphal entry to Jerusalem to his triumphal exit from the tomb. It is this week of Jesus’ life that is central to what it means for him to be the Christ. As we behold him, may we be those who joyfully bow the knee to our king, worshipping him sincerely for his death for us on the cross.

In Christ,

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## **Study 1 - Receiving Jesus**

### **Mark 11:1-25**

King Charles has just announced that he's travelling to Adelaide, and you've been put in charge of planning his welcoming party. Regardless of your opinion of the British Monarch, what would you do? How would you want him to be welcomed?

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### **Pray**

### **Read Mark 11:1-25**

How do you see Jesus as a king in this passage?

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In vv1-7, we get an account of Jesus instructing his disciples to bring him a colt, and then the account of Jesus riding it into Jerusalem over vv8-10. Mark doesn't explain why Jesus is doing this, but if we turn to the Old Testament, we get some clues as to what is happening here. Look at the following passages and fill in the blank columns.

Passage	What meaning it gives behind Jesus' actions.
<b>Genesis 49:10-11</b>	
<b>Zechariah 9:9-10</b>	
<b>2 Kings 9:12-13</b>	
<b>Psalm 118:25-26</b>	

Pulling it all together: what should we understand when Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a colt?

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We might expect Jesus to do some dramatic action after this remarkable entry into Jerusalem. What is the first thing Jesus does when he arrives?

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Mark bookends Jesus' return to the Temple the next day with a story about a fig tree. Just in case we are tempted to think, "poor fig tree! How unreasonable of Jesus. Didn't he realise it wasn't the season for figs?!" there's good reason to suspect that the fig tree was at fault: it was leafy! It was advertising activity, and at this time of year Jesus would have been right to expect a leafy fig tree to have early figs (cf Micah 7:1). Why do you think Mark bookends Jesus' visit to the Temple with the story of the fig tree?

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Philip de Taybull, a hotheaded friend, says, “*Jesus loses it here! He’s flipping tables and throwing doves everywhere! If Jesus can get angry, why is it a big deal if I get angry?*” How would you respond to Philip?

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In v24, Jesus tells his disciples “...whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” Is Jesus promising a blank cheque to all his followers that they can manifest what they want by the strength of their own personal belief? How do we reconcile this promise with the fact that Jesus’ own prayer wasn’t answered in Mark 14:36?

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There’s a big problem going on in the Temple, and Jesus isn’t going to just let it go. Back in Genesis 22:18, God promised through Abraham’s offspring, *all nations* in the world would be blessed. In Isaiah 56:7, God shows that his temple was meant to be a house of prayer for all nations. And now we get to the problem that’s going on in Mark 11: people from all nations can’t get into the Temple! They’re being blocked out. The problem wasn’t with having a space to buy and sell animals and exchange money - this was a provision made in Deuteronomy 14:23-27. The issue was with *where* these tables and traders were set up. They were *inside* the temple courts - most likely in the

court of the Gentiles (the outermost court, where people from all nations could come to pray to God). Instead of a space for prayer, it became a space for trade at the expense of seekers of God.

The physical temple is obsolete - it is no longer the place where people go to meet with God! That role has been taken over by the church - we see that in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21-22. The church - believers in Christ, whether gathered together in a building, or scattered in the world - is the new place where people come to meet with God. The church is God's designated meeting place for the people of the world; it is the only legitimate temple where God's Spirit dwells!

If we are the only temple our neighbours, colleagues will ever set foot in, do we have space for them to meet with God? Is there any way in which we "block out" people who don't know God from getting to know him? Are we too busy to talk about Jesus in our relationships? How could you help people access God through Jesus? What might it look like for you to create space for deeper relationships and for conversation about God? Is there anyone you could invite to know God better - whether by reading Mark one-to-one together, or inviting them to church, or asking how you can pray for them?

## **Pray**

Pray for two friends/neighbours/colleagues for two minutes, that they will come to know Jesus.

## **Study 2 - Questioning Jesus**

### **Mark 11:27-12:34**

Do you have a favourite courtroom drama or interrogation scene from books, movies, or TV? What do you like about it? What makes it so good?

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### **Pray**

### **Read Mark 11:27-12:34**

You might like to assign different speaking roles to different members of the group! You will need:

- Narrator
- Jesus
- Chief priests/teachers of law/elders
- Pharisees and Herodians
- Sadducees
- Teacher of the law (12:28-34)

What do you love about Jesus from this passage?

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Lots of people have plenty of questions to ask Jesus, but how many of them are asked in good faith? Look over the passage again, and fill out the table below.

<b>Person/group asking a question</b>	<b>What do they care about/what's going on behind their question?</b>
<b>Chief Priests/ Teachers of Law/ Elders</b>	
<b>Pharisees and Herodians</b>	
<b>Sadducees</b>	
<b>Teacher of the Law</b>	

In 11:33, the chief priests, elders and teachers of the law say to Jesus that they don't know whether John's baptism was from heaven, or of human origin. Why do they say they don't know?

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In Mark 12:1-11 we read the last recorded parable Jesus taught in Mark. He speaks about a vineyard that was built, complete with wall, winepress and watchtower. This setting would have certainly made Jesus' listeners think of another story of a vineyard. Look at Isaiah 5:1-7 - what is similar between that story and Mark 12:1-11? What differences are there?

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Based on this, why do the chief priests, teachers of the law, and elders react the way they do? Why did Jesus tell this parable?

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Libby Tarryanne, a newcomer to church, says, “*Jesus never said we had to pay taxes; when he was asked about the imperial tax he said to give back to Caeser what is Caesar’s. But the money we get isn’t the government’s - it’s ours, earned by hard work. Why should we pay taxes to them?*” How would you respond to Libby?

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Jesus says that if a coin has Caesar's portrait/image on it, then it belongs to Caesar. And by the same logic, if something has God's image, it belongs to God. Of course, we know that all things belong to God, because he made everything! But what, in all of creation, has God's image on it? Genesis 1:27 tells us that man was made in God's image. And that means that we belong to God. Likewise, Jesus says that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. Think through and share with the group: what does it look like for you to render all of your life to God? Are there any areas of your life that are compartmentalised, and God doesn't get your heart and your service in them?

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For us today, we might not be under imperial occupation and be required to pay taxes to a dictator. But we do have people to whom we owe honour, respect, love and service (Romans 13:6-7). Whether we're studying, or working as employees or employers, or with living parents (or grandparents) or children, how might we give to them what we owe? Take some time to fill out the following table (as relevant).

<b>Home life (spouse, family, housemates, neighbours)</b>	<b>Work life (employer, colleagues, employees)</b>	<b>Study life (lecturer/institution, peers, students)</b>
<b>Civil life (government, council, emergency services)</b>	<b>Church life (pastors, leadership teams, small group leaders)</b>	<b>Family life (parents, extended family, siblings, children, grandchildren)</b>
<b>Sport life (umpires/ referees, teammates, opposition)</b>	<b>Community life (strata, local council, other residents of apartment/ retirement village)</b>	<b>Other spheres</b>

## Pray

Pray for one another around some of the answers you gave to the above questions as you considered how you love the Lord and love your neighbour.

## **Study 3 - Teaching Jesus**

### **Mark 12:35-44**

What do you think you're known for by people around you? Why?

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### **Pray**

### **Read Mark 12:35-44**

What do you love about Jesus from this passage?

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What problem does Jesus identify with the assumption that the Messiah would be David's son (descendant)? Why do you think it's a problem?

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Jesus quotes from Psalm 110, which is a Psalm that is frequently quoted in the New Testament. Read Psalm 110. What pictures does it give us of the Messiah? How well does it apply to Jesus at this point in Mark's Gospel?

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In v37, we read that the large crowd was listening to Jesus with delight as he taught - similar to the reaction of the crowds at the start of Jesus' ministry (Mark 1:27). Does this mean the crowds are followers of Jesus? Why, or why not?

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Jesus gives some stern warnings about the teachers of the law. What is their heart problem?

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A family friend, Penny Pinshore, shares with you, "*I've been working hard to keep my taxable income down super low - write offs and voluntary super contributions. And since Jesus praised the widow's small offering, it's definitely all about the heart - so long as I don't give in a showy way, it doesn't really matter how much I give for God's work.*" How would you respond to Penny?

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There are a few ways to interpret Jesus' reaction to the poor widow's gift. First, there is praise! This one poor widow does something which none of the scribes, teachers of the law or the wealthy crowds did. She gives her *all* to God. She holds absolutely nothing in her life back from being given to God. She is radical in her desire to honour God with her life. The risk of tithing and offerings from the wealthy is that the amount they give can distract from how much they keep for themselves; the amount may or may not be sacrificial and generous depending on their wealth. This widow is giving *everything* she has to live off of. She is demonstrating a radical generosity.

And what about us? Do we have something we "hold back" from God, while giving other, more visible, parts of your life to him? Look at Jesus. He held nothing back from serving us (Mark 10:45), even dying on the cross for us. Is there any area in your life that you're holding back from God? Maybe you could ask God to help you to see these areas in your life, and to help you to bring them before him.

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Another important way to interpret Jesus' reaction is in the context of vv38-40. The entire temple system - from leadership to implementation - is spiritually bankrupt. Jesus has already declared as much in Mark 11-12. And in v40, he has just denounced these teachers of the law for devouring widows houses. In vv41-44 Jesus observes a poor widow, who in her devotion to God

believes that she is offering all she can. A system that prevents Gentiles from accessing God and impoverishes widows - a system that will pay to see Jesus killed in Mark 14:10-11.

To bring this into our context, there have been church leaders who have used their positions of authority in the church to accumulate personal wealth at the expense of their members. We don't have to look too far in church history to find plenty of examples from different denominations and parts of the world. Churches, charities, mission agencies. Could well meaning gospel generosity be funding a spiritually bankrupt system? As a group, discuss: why do you give to the groups you give to? What might it look like to be generous, just as our heavenly Father is generous, ensuring that our generosity is resulting in its intended gospel effects, and not just lining the pockets of a few?

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## **Pray**

Pray for those in leadership positions in our church, and in organisations we support. Pray for good accountability in use of finances to further the gospel. Pray for God's protection from greed.

## **Study 4 - Watching Jesus**

### **Mark 13**

Why do you think disaster movies love to show famous buildings or landmarks being destroyed? Do you have a favourite disaster/apocalypse movie?

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Peter Bolt, in his book “The Cross from a Distance,” reflects on Mark 13:

Interpreters have regularly missed the importance of this chapter for Mark’s story of Jesus, because of the tendency to read it as if Jesus were talking directly about the situation that would prevail after his death and resurrection. On this reading, Mark 13 speaks more about the time of the reader of Mark than about the time of the characters within the story of Mark.<sup>1</sup> This has made chapter 13 something of a misfit in its own Gospel. Surely the chapter should be read like any other in Mark’s story, namely as an integral part of the narrative, making its own contribution to the story in which it is embedded.<sup>1</sup>

Before we study this passage, it is important for us to slow ourselves down, particularly if we have preconceived notions of what Mark 13 must be about, and to ask God to help us hear clearly what he is saying in *this* passage of scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Bolt, Peter. *The Cross from a Distance: Atonement in Mark’s Gospel*. vol. 18, NSBT (IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL: 2004), 91.

## Pray

### Read Mark 13

*For this study, you'll need a printed copy to mark up - one can be found in Appendix 1 at the back of this booklet.*

What do you love about Jesus from this passage?

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The action of Mark 13 all starts with Jesus and his disciples leaving the temple, and Jesus' disciples looking around in awe. Why are they so shocked when Jesus says they'll be destroyed?

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Four of Jesus' disciples come and ask Jesus two follow up questions. *Using your printed copy of Mark 13, underline their questions.* Jesus then talks about two different time periods: **those days** and **that time/that day**. *Underline every mention of these two different time periods.*

Does it feel like Jesus answers their questions?

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Mark 13 is sometimes called Jesus' apocalyptic discourse, based on the similarities with language used in Revelation and Daniel 7-12 (apocalyptic literature in the Bible). One of the key aims of apocalyptic wasn't to confuse or scare readers, but instead to encourage them! *Circle every command/instruction on your printed copy of Mark 13.* What is Jesus encouraging his followers to do?

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Look again over these timings, commands and instructions in Mark 13. Look at the following passages over the rest of Mark's Gospel. How do they relate to what we've seen in Mark 13?

- 14:34, 37-38
- 14:35, 41
- 14:17, 72, 15:1
- 14:51-52
- 14:62
- 15:33, 38

While plenty of interpretation of Mark 13 has focussed on the destruction of the temple in AD70 by Roman forces led by Titus - and with some good reason for thinking so - less time has been dedicated to considering how the greatest abomination that causes desolation - the greatest day of distress in the history of the world - was the day that Jesus was crucified. What is more

horrific than God's people taking God himself, condemning him as a criminal, mocking him, and crucifying him? This doesn't rule out other fulfillments of this passage, but it does give us reason to pause. Why do you think some people reading Mark 13 look for a future fulfillment of this passage, rather than a past one?

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A sceptical friend, De Nyall, shares with you you "*I don't think Jesus is really coming back anytime soon. And I've got so much to keep busy with here and now - work, and my friendships, and all the travel I want to do! It's not like it matters if I'm not waiting by the door for Jesus to come back - and anyway, doesn't he say that no one knows the hour? So why bother waiting!*" How would you respond to De?

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The disciples continued Jesus' teaching from here in Mark 13. In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, Paul exhorts Christians about the day of the Lord, saying it will come like a thief in the night, and calling them to be awake and sober. Peter calls on Christians to have minds that are alert and fully sober, looking towards Jesus' coming in the face of suffering (1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:7-11; 5:8-11). Paul calls for Christians to be alert and continually praying

for the Lord's people, and for him as he preaches (Ephesians 6:18-20). We may not be privy to the exact timing of Jesus' return, but we are informed of how we are to wait for his return.

As a small group, brainstorm: how might you help one another to wait, being watchful and alert, waiting on Jesus' return?

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One chronological marker that Jesus does give for what needs to happen before the end comes is in Mark 13:10 - "*And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.*" Even if we don't know the exact timing of the end, the task God has given his people is to get on with proclaiming the gospel here and now. Peter goes so far as to say the whole reason the end hasn't arrived yet with Jesus' return is because God still wants to save more people (2 Peter 3:9, 15). Instead of speculating about the end of times, our time is better spent in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus to those who don't know it yet. Who are the people you've been praying for? What might your next step be in sharing the gospel of Jesus with them?

## **Pray**

Share with one another who you're praying for, and pray for them for two minutes each.

## **Study 5 - Passover with Jesus**

### **Mark 14:1-26**

What celebrations do you look forward to? Why do you look forward to them?

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### **Pray**

### **Read Mark 14:1-26**

What do you love about Jesus from this passage?

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The plot running behind the scenes of Jesus' time in Bethany is the scheming of the chief priests and the teachers of the law to kill Jesus. Why don't they just arrest Jesus and put him to death? What's holding them back?

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An anonymous woman pours out an expensive jar of perfume on Jesus' head. For the disciples, it's a waste! Why doesn't Jesus agree with them?

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A parent at church, Archie Verr, says over morning tea, “*My eldest child has just started year 12. I need to get them to focus on their studies - even if it means missing church. It's okay - when they're established in their career, there will be time to serve God. I don't want them to waste their time and energy getting too involved in youth and church and miss out on achieving what God has for them.*”

How would you answer Archie?

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Why do you think Jesus’ preparations for the Passover with his disciples are so clandestine? Why might he be exercising more caution at this moment?

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In vv22-25, Jesus celebrates his Last Supper with his disciples, and at the same time institutes the Lord’s Supper (or communion, or eucharist) for all his followers. As you read it, how does Jesus:

- Explain what the bread and wine symbolise?

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- Point forwards to the fulfillment in the Kingdom of God?

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Mike Bird, in his systematic theology text, writes:

Notably, when Jesus wanted his disciples to understand his death and to remember what he did for them, he didn't give them a textbook or a lecture; instead, he gave them a meal.<sup>2</sup>

Just as the woman's gift was a lavish, costly, and humanly foolish outpouring of a precious perfume, so Jesus' death would be a lavish, costly, and humanly foolish outpouring of his blood. Just as the woman held nothing back from loving Jesus, so too Jesus held nothing back from loving and serving his disciples. From loving and serving us. Take a moment to reflect on this meal as a group: how do the bread and the wine in communion communicate Jesus' costly sacrifice to you? What do they mean to you? How might you dwell more on Jesus' purposes for them when we celebrate communion?

## Pray

Give thanks to God for the precious body and blood of Jesus, broken and poured out for our forgiveness and healing.

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<sup>2</sup> Bird, Mike, *Evangelical Theology*. 1st Ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 793.

## **Study 6 - Abandoning Jesus**

### **Mark 14:27-72**

Has there ever been a time when you felt self-conscious and just wanted to blend in?

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### **Pray**

### **Read Mark 14:27-72**

What do you love about Jesus from this passage?

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How do you think Jesus felt when he heard his disciples promising that they would never fall away or disown him? Why?

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Assign different pairs or threes to draw (in comic panel style on a sheet of butchers paper) the events of:

- vv32-42
- vv43-52

- vv53-65
- vv66-72

After you've finished, bring it back to the group and share your images.

When Jesus is praying, we see his deep distress. What is he praying for the Father to take from him when he prays “take this cup from me”? (hint: look at Psalm 75:8 and Jeremiah 25:15-18).

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Fast forwarding through Jesus’ arrest sequence, and we see Jesus at his first trial before the Sanhedrin and the chief priests (vv55-65). What problems are there with the witnesses who are speaking against Jesus? (check out Deuteronomy 19:15-21 for what should have happened in this case!) What does this tell us about the Sanhedrin’s concern for upholding the law?

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In v62, Jesus unambiguously acknowledges that he is the Christ, the Son of God. He immediately speaks about himself as the Son of Man. Why do you think he links this to his confession of his identity? (check out Daniel 7:13-14 for context). Do you think the High Priest believes Jesus?

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Harris Ye, a friend from the workplace, asks you, “*Isn’t it embarrassing for Christians to read about Jesus crying and feeling deeply distressed about his death? Surely if he was God he wouldn’t be feeling anxious about it; he’s in complete control!*” How would you respond to Harris?

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Peter, who only moments earlier had sworn he would be prepared to die for Jesus, in vv66-72 vehemently denies even knowing Jesus. Peter is faced with a choice between denying himself or denying Jesus (cf Mark 8:34-38), and he chooses to deny Jesus. Faithfulness starts in the small areas, not just the grand life-or-death decisions. Think through for yourself: how are you going with denying yourself to honour your Lord? If well, praise God! But if not, are there people who don’t know you’re a Christian in your life? Are there behaviours you go along with or jokes you laugh at to blend in, even though they don’t honour Jesus? What might it look like for you not just to die for Jesus, but to live for him?

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In Hebrews 5:7-10, we read this reflection on Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane.

<sup>7</sup> During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with fervent cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

<sup>8</sup> Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered

<sup>9</sup> and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him <sup>10</sup> and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

There is no sense in which the Son of God was not perfect or complete, but the God-man Jesus Christ hadn't yet fully demonstrated obedience to death - even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8). In this sense, he hadn't "learned obedience" and "become perfect" until he was obedient to the Father. And praise God that he did - he became our source of eternal salvation. God's will that put Jesus on the cross was for our benefit. For our salvation. For our good. God said no to Jesus' prayer of deep distress to save us. Do we feel the weight of this cost? Jesus wasn't steely faced and dispassionate in the face of the cross. He was distressed. And he did it for us.

## Pray

As a group, praise God for Jesus - the Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Man - who used all the authority and power and glory he had to obediently suffer and die for us.

## **Study 7 - Jesus Crucified**

### **Mark 15:1-41**

The cross is seen in all kinds of places today - tattoos, jewellery, logos. But in the Roman Empire's day, it was an instrument of torture, a sign of humiliation, and of the Empire's control, and of death. Can you think of any equivalent tools of Empires, Kingdoms or nations that would have that kind of shock value for us today?

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### **Pray**

### **Read Mark 15:1-41**

What do you love about Jesus from this passage?

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Mark 15 is the only place where Jesus is called “king” in all of Mark. Do a quick scan of the passage again. How many times does the phrase “king” get used to describe Jesus? (including accusations and mockery)

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While the Sanhedrin felt comfortable condemning Jesus to death, Pilate seems more reluctant. What convinces him to hand Jesus over to be crucified?

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What is the irony in the mockery of the soldiers, the bystanders and the chief priests and teachers of the law?

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Three times in Mark (8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34), Jesus had prophesied about his death and resurrection. Compare those prophecies now with what has happened so far in Mark 14-15. How much has happened so far as Jesus said it would? What hasn't happened yet?

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Speaking of prophecy, while he's on the cross, Jesus quotes from Psalm 22. Compare the details of Psalm 22 with the details of Mark 15. Why do you think Jesus was quoting this Psalm at this moment of anguish?

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A Catholic friend, Kurt Tentearre, visits church on Good Friday and asks “*I don’t think it’s wise to pray to God directly. After all, in Leviticus 10:1-2 we see priests burned up by God because they didn’t treat him as holy enough. Surely we need to pray to people who are in God’s good books. People like saints. Or our Mother, who can speak to her son on our behalf. But we could never have access to the Father directly!*” How would you respond to Kurt?

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It isn’t from a trusting disciple or a devout Jew that the first human confession of Jesus’ divinity comes. It’s from a Gentile centurion, standing at the foot of the cross on which Jesus just died. All of Mark has been building up to this confession since Mark 1:1. At long last, there is a human acknowledgement that Jesus is the Son of God. And this moment of realisation comes *because of* Jesus’ death for sin. The most clear demonstration of Jesus’ person and work is in his death on the cross. Does that prompt anything for you as you consider sharing your faith with others?

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In Hebrews 10:19-22, the author writes

<sup>19</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

The curtain is torn in two. Jesus death has paid the price for sin, and has opened the way for us to enter God's presence. We are covered in Jesus' blood. We are invited to come into God's presence directly! There is nothing that can prevent us from being with our Father. Isn't that wonderful?

As a group, why not take some time together to reflect on Jesus' sacrifice for us? You might like to listen to and/or sing a song together, such as:

- Amazing Grace - John Newton
- O Sacred Head Now Wounded
- Glories of Calvary - Ryan Baird and Sovereign Grace Music
- Man of Sorrows - Hillsong Worship and Jadwin Gillies

## Pray

Praise God that we can pray to him and praise him directly because of Jesus' death on the cross for us.

## **Study 8 - Jesus Raised Mark 15:42-16:8**

Do you like cliffhanger endings to books, movies or TV shows? Why, or why not?

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### **Pray**

#### **Read Mark 15:42-16:8**

*You may notice the editorial note in your Bibles around Mark 16:9-20 -“the earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have verses 9-20.” Whether Mark originally had a longer ending that is lost, or was meant to end with v8, is a matter that is contested by scholars. We’ll bypass this argument altogether; we have other accounts testifying to the resurrection of Jesus that agree with what Mark has and provide more information for our understanding of that first Easter Sunday and beyond.*

What do you love about Jesus from this passage?

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How is Joseph of Arimathea introduced to us? Why do you think he showed care for Jesus’ body?

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Do you think Jesus' disciples expected him to rise again from the dead? Why, or why not?

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Do you think they should have? What has Jesus said that would make them expect his resurrection?

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How do Mary Magdalene, Mary and Salome react to the news that Jesus has risen from the dead? Why do you think they react this way?

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In v7, the young man/angel tells the women to go and tell Jesus' disciples *and Peter* to go to Galilee. Why do you think Peter is singled out from the rest of the disciples?

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Anna Stasia, a Greek friend, shares one afternoon, “*I love Jesus and Christianity, and the idea of him dying as a wonderful example for us of love that suffers for others. But I don’t know if I can really believe this resurrection business - isn’t it just a myth? The spirit of Jesus lives on in his followers and teachings, even if the man is long dead. Does a resurrection even matter?*” How might you respond to Anna?

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A major theme that has permeated all throughout Mark’s Gospel has been faith and fear. Will Jesus’ followers believe in him, trust him, and show allegiance to him? Or will they be alarmed and afraid? Consider these passages again:

- 2:5 - Jesus responds to the faith of the friends carrying the paralysed man on the mat by forgiving his sins.
- 4:35-41 - the disciples are afraid in the storm on the sea of Galilee, and in v40 Jesus asks “*Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?*”
- 5:15-16 - the townspeople who observe the man possessed by a legion of demons healed by Jesus are afraid! They push Jesus away.

- 5:33-34 - the woman who was bleeding for 12 years was afraid, yet came clean to Jesus about touching him to be healed. Jesus told her that her faith healed her.
- 5:36 - Jesus tells Jairus, the synagogue leader, “*Don’t be afraid; just believe.*”
- 6:6 - Jesus is amazed at the lack of faith/belief/trust in Nazareth.
- 6:50 - the disciples are terrified at the sight of Jesus walking on water, but he tells them not to be afraid.
- 9:24 - the father who has a son possessed by a spirit cries out to Jesus “*I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!*”
- 9:32 - the disciples are afraid to ask Jesus what he means when he is teaching about his future death and resurrection.
- 10:32 - Jesus is leading the way to Jerusalem, with his disciples astonished and those who followed described as being afraid.
- 10:52 - Jesus says that Bartimaeus’ faith has healed him.
- 11:18 - the chief priests and the teachers of the law fear Jesus, because people are amazed by his teaching.
- 11:22-25 - Jesus speaks of the power of having faith/belief/trust in God.
- 16:8 - the women flee the empty tomb and are afraid.

It doesn’t seem that there’s primarily a problem with fear. The problem is in allowing fear to prevent you from trusting and obeying Jesus. While Mark ends with fear crowding out obedience and trust, we know that it isn’t the end of the road for these early witnesses to Jesus! Where do you think you stand when it comes to faith at the moment? Are you crowded out by fear - fear of what others think, or fear of rejection, or fear of failure? Perhaps you

could pray a prayer similar to the father in Mark 9:24. Or do you feel full of faith, and are striving to be fully obedient to Jesus even here and now? Praise God. What does it look like for you to take this faith and boldness and to tell others about him? To witness to his resurrection to a world that desperately needs the resurrection hope?

Reflect on your own, then share with one or two others in your group.

### **Pray**

Pray for one another in these pairs or triplets. Pray for boldness to trust Christ, even when feeling afraid. Pray for opportunities to witness to him, and for the courage to take these opportunities.

## **Appendix 1 - Mark 13 (NIV)**

As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!” <sup>2</sup> “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

<sup>3</sup> As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup> “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. <sup>6</sup> Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. <sup>7</sup> When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup> Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

<sup>9</sup> “You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. <sup>10</sup> And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. <sup>11</sup> Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

<sup>12</sup> “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup> Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

<sup>14</sup> “When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup> Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. <sup>16</sup> Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. <sup>17</sup> How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! <sup>18</sup> Pray that this will not take place in winter, <sup>19</sup> because those will be days of distress unequaled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again.

<sup>20</sup> “If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. <sup>21</sup> At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. <sup>22</sup> For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. <sup>23</sup> So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

<sup>24</sup> “But in those days, following that distress,

“ ‘the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light;  
<sup>25</sup> the stars will fall from the sky,  
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’r

<sup>26</sup> “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

<sup>28</sup> “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. <sup>30</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

<sup>32</sup> “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

<sup>35</sup> “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <sup>36</sup> If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup> What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’ ”