

Where we start . . .

Think of the last great movie you saw or the last good novel you read. Can you provide a two or three sentence description of what that work was about?

What is necessary in providing a good summary of a story, a novel, a movie?

What we read . . .

This week we end our journey through Mark. And as we come to the close, we want to reflect on what we have seen and heard, observed and learned, responded to and reflected on.

As you think back over our journey through Mark, what stands out to you about Jesus? What about Him has come more clearly into focus for you as we have studied the Gospel of Mark?

Thinking back over our study, what have you come to grasp about what Jesus came to do? How does Mark picture His mission?

Clearly, Jesus intended to draw people to follow Him. We don't get to follow in quite the same way as those who were physically present with Him, but we are still invited to follow. What are you coming to understand about what it means to know and follow Jesus from what we have looked at in Mark?

Why this matters . . .

Knowing Jesus is really the foundation for experiencing life. So, summarize it-how have you come to know Jesus better and how has that insight shaped you through our study of Mark?



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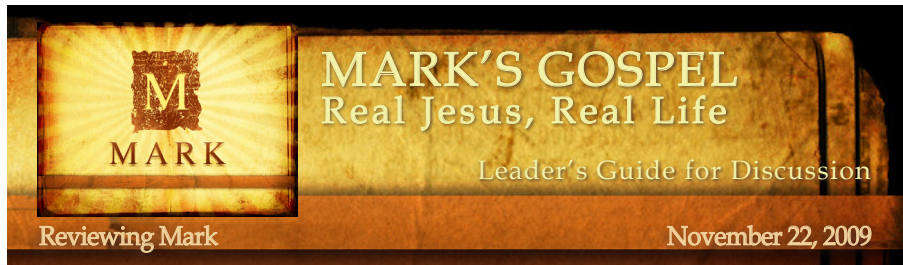
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Diving in . . .

This week we are simply trying to look back on the journey through Mark and gather together, in hands and heads and hearts, some of the big ideas presented to us in this Gospel.

Sometimes, as people think back over the kind of prolonged study that we have undertaken, they may end up a bit intimidated or discouraged, feeling as if they “don’t remember anything!” That is, they might feel that they have lost touch with things glimpsed earlier, or they might think that they haven’t really been impacted very much at all by the study.

It might help, in thinking about a lengthy study like ours, to think of what you’ve eaten over the past year. Most of us cannot recall every meal we’ve had; we might only remember a few particular moments in a few special meals. But, the truth is, most of us have eaten well! We have been sustained and nourished by what we have eaten. And the same is true of our study.

We might not be able to recall many “specific meals” as we have feasted on Mark, but we have been feeding well. So, encourage your people to not be discouraged or undone if they can’t recall many specific moments. What we are hoping for is some broad-brush painting, some reflection of the sense, the momentum, the impact . . . even if individual moments cannot be recalled with exactness.

Discussing . . .

When summarizing a movie or a novel, you want to be able to capture the major players, the primary action or story line, and the point of the story. Those kind of elements are, ultimately, what we want your people to uncover and discuss as they reflect on the Gospel of Mark.

Are there specific things we want them to recall? Are we hoping that they remember particular phrases or words, expressions or illustrations? Not really. What we want is for us to take time and *realize that we have been changed by coming to know Jesus in fresh ways.*

Charlie has spoken, repeatedly, about thinking through Mark in terms of three big questions: Who is Jesus? What did Jesus come to do? What does it mean to know and follow Him? Those three questions are the framework for the questions in the discussion guide this week.

As your people process the questions and discuss them, they might not all come to full agreement on each facet of what they have seen or learned or

appropriated. That’s OK! We’ve been in Mark for a long time (over a year); your people are not all encountering Jesus at the same point in life (their individual life situations are as different as those depicted by Mark). So it shouldn’t be surprising if there is some variety in how people reflect on what they have seen and learned and heard and experienced. Allow them to enjoy the richness of encountering Jesus in fresh ways through Mark.

There are a few places you can anchor your own thinking as you reflect on Mark and seek to lead your discussion. To get you launched in reflecting on Mark, here are a couple of key ideas:

Who is Jesus?

Mark 1:1-8 helps us see that Jesus is “the Lord” (Yahweh) come to visit His people.

Mark 2:1-12 underscores for us that Jesus is the one who “has authority” to forgive sins and bring healing.

Mark 10:41-45 highlights that Jesus is the servant of all.

Mark 14:60-62 finds Jesus clearly stating that He is the one to whom all will ultimately answer.

What did Jesus come to do?

Mark 1:14-15 introduces Jesus’ ministry to us, making it clear that He comes to inaugurate the breaking in of God’s kingdom into life in a fresh way.

Mark 1:29-39 shows us Jesus extending God’s kingdom blessings through teaching and healing and confronting demonic powers.

Mark 2:15-22 underscores that what Jesus is doing is bringing healing to those who are soul sick, introducing a fresh new way to understand life.

Mark 10:45 makes it clear that Jesus’ serving is more than just doing “nice things,” but culminates in Him ransoming/rescuing people through His death.

Mark 14:22-28 helps us understand that Jesus serving us in His death brings us into a brand new agreement (a “covenant”) with God.

What does it mean to know and follow Jesus?

Mark 6: 7-13 pictures Jesus’ closest followers participating in the extension of His own ministry.

Mark 8:34-38 underscores the necessity of abandoning ourselves to life on Jesus’ terms and jettisoning the idea that we can follow Him on our terms.

Mark 10:17-31 makes it clear that privilege and prominence don’t matter, but getting our focus entirely on Jesus.

Mark 16:14-20 shows us that Jesus intends for His friends and followers to continue to be engaged in an extension of His message and His ministry into the world in which they live, as He works through them.

Those in your group might reflect on other passages than these; that’s great! What we are hoping for is some honest reflection on how magnificent and wonderful Jesus is and what a life-changing and joyful journey He has called us into. May the Spirit magnify Jesus in our midst to the glory of the Father.