Session 2: Mark 1:14–45

SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

Main Idea: As disciples who follow Jesus Christ, we are called to surrender every aspect of our lives completely to him.

Head Change: To understand that true discipleship requires a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Heart Change: To feel motivated toward obedience by his love, not our guilt.

Life Change: To surrender every aspect of our lives to the Holy Spirit's transforming work.

OPEN

When have you ever felt God calling you to something drastically new? Perhaps a job, a move, a relationship shift. How did you react?

This session looks at the rest of Mark chapter 1, where Jesus begins his miraculous healing ministry. Francis Chan will continue his teaching through what these verses mean, and how followers of Jesus can apply them today.

READ

Read Mark 1:14–45.

WATCH

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in Francis's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions:

What does Jesus focus on as he begins his preaching ministry?

What was unique about Jesus's invitation to the disciples to follow him?

How did the city respond to Jesus's miraculous healings? How should we?

Show Session 2: Mark 1:14–45 (10 minutes)

DISCUSS

In the last session, Francis showed us how the first thirteen verses give a pretty profound picture of Jesus's right to call people to follow him. And that's what Francis is excited about in this session—not only does Jesus have the right to call us, he *does* call us.

How did you feel after watching this session?

Read Mark 1:14–20.

Mark doesn't leave us wondering about the uniqueness of this Jesus. He makes sure we realize that this is *the* biggest moment in history. And he does it with one word: *kairos*, or "time" (in Mark 1:15). The word signifies an important, momentous moment rather than a specific time of day.

[Note: For further study on Mark's use of kairos*, see Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of the session.]*

Think back over your life. All of us have life-changing moments in our personal histories. Maybe our view of the world changed when we realized there was no recess in middle school. Or maybe life transformed when we were in our first car accident.

Describe a moment when life for you completely changed—where you knew the world was going to be different and there was no going back. How did you feel? Were you excited, afraid, nervous?

Right at the start of Jesus's ministry, he begins to gather his disciples. Blue-collar fishermen weren't ideal choices for a rabbi's students. **How**

did the disciples react to Jesus's invitation to follow him?

Put yourself in their shoes for a moment. How do you think you would have responded if you had been in the fishing boat with Peter?

If we live comfortable lives, it's easy to see Jesus's call as an inconvenience. We have more to lose—more to give up—if we're going to follow him. **What do you stand to lose by following Jesus the way the disciples did? What do you stand to gain by following Jesus?**

In the first twenty verses, we've seen Jesus declare his purpose: to announce the kingdom of God and call people into it. Beginning in Mark 1:21, Jesus begins to demonstrate his purpose through miraculous works.

[Note: For further study on the concept of the kingdom of God, see Go Deeper Section 2 at the end of the session.]

Read Mark 1:21–34.

Throughout the video, Francis emphasized the authority of Jesus as a driving factor for discipleship. **Whom does Jesus use that authority to help?**

These verses give us the first glimpses of Jesus's power on display. He does not just *claim* to have authority—he proves it. **What were the people saying about his teaching (1:22)?**

What authority does he show with Peter's mother-in-law (1:29–31)? In what way was his encounter with her counter-cultural? (In the patriarchal society of that time, women were

often marginalized. But all throughout Jesus's ministry he places great importance on women.)

Describe the kind of authority he demonstrates in 1:32–34. What does this tell us about the extent and nature of his power?

Because those oppressed by demons were not simply dealing with psychological disorders, Jesus casting out demons illustrates in a very practical way the kingdom of God replacing that of Satan in the world.

In this passage, what do all three of the people Jesus healed have in common? In what ways did his care for women, lepers, and a demon-possessed man demonstrate his new kingdom come to earth?

Mark's point with this presentation of Jesus's authority is that he has the right to extend the kingdom to whomever he chooses. And that includes the sick, marginalized, and hurting.

So what does this mean for us? How do we live differently in light of Jesus's authority?

Think of one person who grates on you—the last person in the world you'd want Jesus to offer the kingdom to. Why do you feel that way? What would have to change in your attitude in order to treat that person the way Jesus demonstrates in our passage this week?

Re-read Mark 1:35–45.

In the midst of healing many, Jesus gets up early and goes out to pray while it's still dark. **Why is**

this important? What implications does Jesus's actions have for us?

What do the disciples say when they find Jesus?

How does Jesus respond? Are you surprised by his response? Why or why not?

[Note: For further study on the disciples' search for Jesus, see Go Deeper Section 3 at the end of the session.]

In the video session, Francis concluded by saying he hopes that when we encounter Jesus, our response will be, "I'll do anything to follow this man."

Two thousand years after calling his first disciples, Jesus still calls us to follow him. **How are you responding to him now? In what ways does your life, your priorities, your attitudes reflect his call on your life?**

LAST WORD

Mark wants us to see the full implications of Jesus, the Son of God, come to earth. The kingdom of God has begun in the hearts of those who choose to say *yes* to him. Followers of Jesus are world-changers but in an upside-down way—just like the one they follow. Jesus displayed his authority in ways that served the undesirable, the lowly, the outcast. He healed, he restored, he cleansed—all of the miracles we see in this opening scene of his ministry are directed to those outside the establishment. God shows no favoritism, and neither should we.

If we truly want to follow Jesus, we will love those he loves and serve those he was willing to serve. A healthy church is pursuing justice, lifting up the poor, coming alongside the hurting. Examine what you are doing personally to demonstrate the care of Jesus to those in need.

Decide what practical steps you will take to love someone outside of your usual circle. **Is there a way your group could serve those in need together?**

GO DEEPER

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material. We've highlighted a place where each of the following segments could fit in the Discuss section of the study guide.

But you can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting.

***1. Peek at the Greek:* kairos**

In Mark 1:15, Jesus says, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." The term he uses for "time" is *kairos*, which makes his audience think of a divinely appointed moment. For instance, the Greek translators of the Old Testament used *kairos* describe the birth of Isaac, which God promised would happen at an appointed time. Greek has another word that refers more specifically to hours-and-minutes time: *chronos*. By using *kairos*, Jesus's statement is far more significant than, "Hey everyone, it's 5 p.m. so God's kingdom is now here." He's referring to a moment of divine fulfillment, one in which all of the messianic promises in the Old Testament find their target in him.

Describe one significant, life-altering moment from your own life. Were you aware of its significance at the time?

In what ways did that moment influence your faith?

2. Background: What did Jesus mean by "kingdom of God"?

We've already established in Mark 1:15 that Jesus came in into this world to proclaim that the kingdom of God is at hand. His earthly presence signaled that God was done preparing. But what is the kingdom of God, exactly?

During the time of Jesus, the Jewish community anticipated a militaristic kingdom where God would rule over the nations through Israel. However, Jesus flipped that idea on its head. In his gospel, Mark uses the expression "kingdom of God" fourteen times.

From the start, in 1:15, Jesus says, "the kingdom of God is at hand." The verb he uses literally means, "has drawn near" and he immediately ties it to repentance and belief. Not once does Mark refer to "the kingdom of God" in terms of an outward militaristic kingdom, like the one anticipated by the Jews. Rather, Jesus declares that the reign of God begins with the internal surrender of his people.

In other words, we are no longer waiting. The kingdom of God is spreading even now, and it takes root primarily in the hearts of people. It's easy for us to get caught up in thinking similar to that of the Jews during Jesus's time. They longed for power and we do the same today. We talk a lot about Christianity's influence in culture. While there's nothing wrong with that, we have to remember that the kingdom of God begins first of foremost with a transformed heart.

God is at work creating a people, which means the focus of discipleship is helping people surrender and follow Jesus. Jesus did not come simply to change our circumstances, but to transform our hearts.

So, what do you come to Jesus looking for?

How have you witnessed the kingdom active in your life? What does it look like?

Does the idea that God does not always change our circumstances but is more concerned with our hearts frustrate you or comfort you? Explain.

Write out an honest prayer to him, confessing wrongheaded expectations of Jesus, and asking for a desire to surrender and follow.

3. Peek at the Greek: katadioko

Like Francis pointed out in the video, it didn't take long for Jesus's popularity to gain traction. Yet, after attracting one of his first crowds (v. 33) he steals away in solitude to pray (v. 35). Confused by his withdrawal, the disciples "searched for him" (v. 36). Interestingly, Mark uses the verb *katadioko*, which nearly always describes a hostile form of pursuit—like a bounty hunter chasing an escaped prisoner. The disciples are looking for Jesus because they feel like he's blowing the opportunity to capitalize on his growing fame. Instead, they find him praying in solitude. By using the verb *katadioko*, Mark suggests their misplaced craving for influence through Jesus, which is fundamentally a misunderstanding of the purposes of God.

Jesus's response to his own fame differs from his disciples' response. **Being honest, how do you think *you* would have responded to Jesus when you found him praying?**

Oftentimes the Christian life does not deliver what we expect it to. Hardships and struggle may dominate your life more than favor and happiness. **What expectations of Jesus do you have now?**

Reflect on Jesus's habit of withdrawing for prayer during significant events. **In what ways can you begin, or further, such a practice?**