Session 6: Mark 6:1–29

SESSION GOALS

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

Main Idea: Faithful following means doing what Jesus asks regardless of the worldly outcome.

Head Change: To know that following Jesus includes times of celebration and times of persecution.

Heart Change: To feel free from the burden of believing that we alone are responsible for someone else's salvation.

Life Change: To practically strategize how we may share the good news of Jesus.

OPEN

The phrase "No prophet is welcome in his hometown" originated with this passage. It relates to other sayings such as "Physician, heal yourself," and "The cobblers' kids have no shoes." **What do these sayings have in common? In what ways have you witnessed one of them come to life?**

It's tough going home sometimes. Even the perfect son of Nazareth endured skepticism and ridicule. His hometown folks were so busy going through the motions that they missed the miracle right in front of them.

READ

Read Mark 6:1–29.

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:

How did the people in Jesus's time understand the nature of God?

Why was Jesus unable to do miraculous works within his hometown?

What is the role of faith in effectively living in obedience to God?

Show Session 6: Mark 6:1–29 (9 minutes)

DISCUSS

As a society, we tend to glorify our public leaders, whether political, religious, or entertainment stars. They seem larger than life sometimes. But they have parents, and often siblings, who knew them before fame. Old friends, too, can serve as a humility check.

Nazareth was a small town, and the residents remembered Jesus just fine. When he came back home to preach, they thought they really knew him. “Oh, it’s Mary’s boy.” But then he began to teach them.

Read Mark 6:1–6.

How do his hometown people receive Jesus after he teaches in their synagogue?

In the video session, Francis made the point that it’s easy to respond to this scene with the benefit of our hindsight. We’re shocked that the crowds would reject Jesus. Yet, the same situations occur all around us today. People hear the gospel and dismiss it rather than embrace it.

Note especially the end of verse 3: “And they took offense at him.” The word for “took offense” comes from *skandalizo*, where we get our word “scandal.” His words were scandalous to them.

[Note: For further study on skandalizo*, see Go Deeper section 1 at the end of this session.]*

Think about your own spiritual journey. When you encountered Jesus for the first time, how did you respond?

Maybe you met Jesus as a child through your parents, or someone introduced you to him as an

adult. Whatever the situation, there was a time where you had to decide what you were going to do with Jesus's call.

Now think about the possible objections you might have had (or maybe still do have) to Jesus. What objections to Jesus would you expect someone to have today?

Part of the road of discipleship includes sharing in Jesus's mission. That means we're going to be taking his gospel to other people. We'll face the same rejections or acceptance that Jesus did.

What sort of opposition to Christ have you observed personally? Share your stories.

Now consider those opposed to Christ, or at least uninterested in him. In what ways does your relationship with him give you empathy and compassion for the lost?

Read Mark 6:7–13, and as you read, look for details that mirror the way Jesus has already shown his disciples how to spread the message of the coming kingdom.

Jesus sends the disciples out two by two on a mission to spread the same message of repentance that John the Baptist did. The word "repent" (*metanoeo*) means to change your mind or purpose. The disciples were going out to exhort people to change their minds about God and their relationship to him.

What reactions does he prepare his disciples to face while they are out on the road? How are they to respond?

[Note: For further study on metanoeo*, see Go Deeper section 2 at the end of this session.]*

The disciples' message is the same one we hear. **What role does repentance play in your life? How did you "change your mind" about Jesus when you first believed?**

In what ways do you continue to repent in order to remain close to your savior?

What does Mark 6:7–13 say to modern disciples? How would you incorporate the message of this passage into your faith conversations?

Jesus doesn't wait until the end of Mark to send the disciples out to spread the message of the kingdom of God. Regardless of where your relationship is with Jesus, you have a part to play in his mission in the world.

How can you practically live like the disciples did here? How would you engage someone in conversation about the picture of Jesus you've seen here?

Repentance can be a hard pill to swallow. It requires humility to change, to admit you were wrong. Our next passage reflects this through a flashback to King Herod who had heard John the Baptist's call to repent. Let's just say that he didn't respond well.

Read Mark 6:14–20.

[Note: For further study on King Herod, see Go Deeper section 3 at the end of this session.]

What got John in trouble with Herod in the first place? Why, despite the trouble, did Herod keep John around?

We've seen some poor reactions to those who shared the message of Jesus, but none so bad as Herod and his wife. When John declared their marriage a violation of God's law, it got him thrown in prison. Herodias even wanted him executed. Herod kept John around, though, because of the message he preached. It intrigued him.

Now read Mark 6:21–29.

What choice does John have in the matter of his life or death? Why does he die?

Most of us won't face an angry queen or a militant machete because of our faith in Jesus. But the question we have to answer with each moment of our lives is simply, "Would we die for him?"

The cost of discipleship—the price of following Jesus—is *everything*. Up to and including our very lives. Many over the last two millennia have chosen death over giving up Jesus. Most of us won't face a choice that drastic, but we are still called to give up our lives for him.

Today, consider what you can surrender, put aside, or give away so that you can have the opportunity to show Jesus to someone else. Whatever it is, consider it practice. We are following the one who came to die for us all.

What have you sacrificed to follow Jesus? What opportunities did it open up for you?

What does dying for Jesus look like for you? Why is it worth the effort?

LAST WORD

This passage deals with some of the more difficult realities of following Jesus. His message doesn't always go over well. But he invites us to practice the mission before we may feel ready. And we've seen that following Jesus will cost us.

How has this week's study inspired you? Is there something you know you must "change your mind" about? Perhaps you sense a call to surrender or a situation in which to step out in faith. Share if you feel comfortable.

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:* skandalizo**

In Mark 6:3, we find a word that gives us insight into a crucial aspect of what happens when we share the message of Jesus with others. Mark writes that when the Jewish community in Nazareth heard Jesus teaching, they "took offense." The Greek word is *skandalizo*, from which we get the English term "scandal."

Throughout the New Testament, *skandalizo* often shows up to describe Jewish reactions to Jesus. Sometimes it takes the form of a noun and gets translated "stumbling block" (See Rom 9:33; 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal 5:11; 1 Pet. 2:8). Like Francis pointed out in the video session, the problem with the people of Nazareth was their unbelief in the face of Jesus's teachings.

In a day and age where we're very hesitant to offend anyone, the true gospel is provocative—it always has been. That doesn't mean we should be divisive or impolite when we tell people about Jesus. But we *should* expect the message itself to come across like a scandal.

Reflect on occasions when you have talked about Jesus and faced resistance. What sort

of setting were you in—with folks you knew, with strangers, in person or online, etc.? What objections did your listeners bring up?

Why are we to persist in sharing the gospel despite opposition? What's the point?

In what ways is your faith strengthened through uncomfortable faith conversations?

2. Peek at the Greek: metanoeo

One of the biggest reasons (if not *the* biggest reason) that the message of Jesus is off-putting to some is the issue of repentance. In 6:12, Mark says the disciples proclaimed that people should *repent*.

The word translated "repent" is *metanoeo*, which literally means to change one's mind. In the Old Testament Hebrew, the word is *shub*, which means to physically turn around or turn back. If we take both together, repentance involves both our mind and our behavior. It involves turning our backs on all that is ungodly and turning to face what is pleasing to God—both literally in how we behave but also in how we think.

Mark makes repentance the hallmark requirement for salvation. No one can be saved without acknowledging their sin and clinging to Jesus.

What do we do with this information? The reason the gospel is so provocative is precisely because it demands change. Think about it—people might to turn to God when it would mean a change from bad circumstances. But if life's good, why change at all?

Even for us who already accept the message, change is hard. Repentance is still hard.

Think about your own relationship with Jesus. How has it changed your mind about various beliefs? Certain behaviors?

In what ways has your faith in Christ changed your goals and hopes for the future?

3. Background: Which Herod is which?

King Herod plays a part in several New Testament narratives. But we must be careful to know which Herod the authors are referring to.

Herod the Great
Herod the Great ruled Judea during the time of Jesus's birth. His reign lasted from 37 BC to 4 BC; he was the king whom the magi met, and who had the boys of Bethlehem murdered in his search for the baby Jesus.

Imagine having that sort of father. How might his sons have related to Herod the Great?

Herod the Great had numerous wives and children. After his death, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons, the northern portion of Galilee going to his son Herod Antipas. Antipas is the Herod we meet in Mark 6.

Antipas
Years before, Antipas had fallen for Herodias, who was both his niece (the daughter of his late half-brother Aristobulous,) and his sister-in-law—wife of another half-brother, identified in Mark 6 as Philip. Herodias thus had married her half-

uncle and, with Antipas, married another one. The Herodian family was complex, to say the least.

When John the Baptist began his ministry, Antipas and Herodias lived together openly as husband and wife. As Mark 6 flashes back, we discover that John had rebuked Antipas for marrying her, as such a marriage went against the Law of Moses. In retaliation, Antipas imprisoned him but occasionally brought him out to hear his teaching. “Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly” (6:20).

Herodias felt no such respect. She “had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death” (6:19). When her daughter danced before Herod at his birthday banquet (6:21–25), Antipas was so pleased that he offered to give her anything she desired. Her request—at her mother’s prompting—was John’s head on a platter. Antipas reluctantly granted her request (Mark 6:27–28; Matt 14:9–11).

In this story we find a lesson about pride and humility: the high-ranking Herodias was unwilling to accept censure from a wilderness preacher. **How well do you accept rebuke for sinful behavior?**

We also see the results of unwise, spontaneous promises: Antipas did not consider the potential consequences of his promise to give her “anything.” **Have you ever spoken before you thought it through completely? Were you able to make things right?**

Crucifixion of Jesus

Later, Jesus appeared before Antipas as part of the trumped-up trial before his crucifixion (Luke 23:6–12). When Pilate questioned him, he learned that Jesus was Galilean and sent him to Antipas (Luke 23:2–5). Initially, Antipas was glad to see Jesus and hoped that he might perform a miracle (Luke 23:8; 9:9). But having questioned him with no response, Antipas sent him back to Pilate, concluding that he was innocent (Luke 23:10–11; 23:12, 15).

A third Herod: Agrippa

Whereas Herodias was the daughter of Aristobulus (son of Herod the Great), Herod Agrippa was her brother. He deposed Antipas, his uncle, in 39 AD, to become ruler of a large portion of Judea, Galilee, and surrounding territories. He persecuted Christians, ordering the execution of the apostle James (Acts 12:1–3), and the imprisonment of the apostle Peter (Acts 12:3–19), after which Agrippa died directly as a judgment of God.

The contrast between the Herodian family and that of Jesus and John is stark. One dysfunctional family hungry for glory, the other—cousins—hungry for the glory of God. Every royal political machination was motivated by a self-centered pursuit of self-aggrandizement. John the Baptist and Jesus preached the Word of God, repentance, and holiness.

We may not be royals, but often we often seek fame and glory. **What does that look like in your life?**

Have accolades and praise filled you up emotionally? Made you think better of

yourself? Or have they exposed an emptiness in your life? How?

How can the contrast between the Herods and John and Jesus help you reflect on your own motivations? How can you move from seeking your own glory to seeking God's instead?