Session 8: Mark 8:31–10:52

SESSION GOALS

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

Main Idea: To be a true disciple of Jesus, we must lay aside everything we possess and all that we are to sacrificially serve like Jesus did.

Head Change: To recognize Jesus's mission for exactly what it is.

Heart Change: To feel acceptance in light of his call on our lives.

Life Change: To listen and follow him in laying down our lives.

OPEN

Most of us have a moment in our lives where we knew that something significant had happened. Whether it was an academic achievement, discovering a talent we didn't know we had, or watching the birth of a child. There are moments that change how we see the world. **What's the most life-changing thing that's ever happened to you?**

In this lesson we're going to look at a pivotal moment in the book of Mark—the transition that changes everything we're supposed to think about Jesus and his mission.

READ

Read Mark 8:31–10:52. (This is a fairly long section. If you don't have the time to read through all of it before watching the video, at least read Mark 8:31–9:13.)

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 is the difference between the disciples' expectations and Jesus's true mission?

Onto what kind of road, or journey, is Jesus inviting his followers?

What kind of hope did Jesus give them of his eventual victory over the world?

Show Session 8: Mark 8:31–10:52 (8 minutes)

DISCUSS

After Peter declares Jesus as the Christ (see Mark 8:27–30), we find a puzzling exchange between the two.

Read Mark 8:31–33. Jesus goes from accepting Peter's declaration to calling him Satan.

As Francis described it in the video session, what was Peter's misunderstanding about Jesus's mission? How do you think Peter (and, presumably, the other disciples) arrived at that wrong conclusion?

Read 8:34–38. **Based on this passage, what's the real mission of the Christ?**

Look for the attitude that Francis pointed out in Peter. Look for how Jesus counters that attitude, and what he offers in its place.

Thinking back to Francis's teaching and looking at what you've read, what do you think bothered Peter about Jesus's statement?

What challenge does Jesus lay down before his followers and the disciples? How does Jesus's challenge differ from Peter's implied expectations?

The Jews had been waiting for centuries for God's chosen one to come and set them free from political oppression. But throughout the story so far, Jesus has offered the disciples the chance to see him and his mission for what it really is—the overthrow not of Rome but of the kingdom of darkness. Jesus kept pointing them to his true purpose.

Re-read 8:34–36. Francis said that the road to glory will include suffering. **What kind of discipleship is he calling us to? What might that look like practically?**

Now read Mark 9:1–13. He begins with a promise to the disciples that some would see the kingdom of God come in power. **Put yourself back in the shoes of the disciples. What are you anticipating from Jesus after that statement?**

The text then jumps ahead almost a week later. Jesus has once again gone up the mountain, this time with Peter, James, and John. In this passage there are signs of the disciples' confusion—particularly of Peter.

What aspects of the event on the mountain do you think would lead the three disciples to thinking Jesus had changed his mind? Why?

Look back at Mark 1 and Jesus's baptism. **What similarities and differences do you see between that event and the Transfiguration? Contrast and compare who was involved, where and when the events happened, what was said, etc.**

The whole point of the passage isn't to get the disciples—or us—excited about Jesus coming in power to conquer Rome or whatever boogey man we hope he'll fight for us. It's about God making it absolutely clear that whatever Jesus says, we need to obey.

[Note: For further study on the Transfiguration, see Go Deeper Section 1 at the end of the session.]

What's the hardest aspect of discipleship for you? What presents the biggest challenge? Where are you having trouble obeying Jesus?

Read the vignette in Mark 9:14–29. The disciples get fixated on power rather than purpose and fail to cast out a demon. Jesus repeats his demonstration of power-used-for-compassion-not-conquering.

But in the middle, we find a heart-wrenching yet comforting moment. The father of the demon-possessed child knows that faith is the key to rescue. But he needs help. So, he asks for it.

We may be tempted to assume that having great faith means we never ask for help. But that's not right. **Are you willing to come to Jesus and ask for help? Are there areas of your life where you've not asked God to help you? If so, why?**

In the video session, Francis doesn't teach through Mark 9:30–10:52. As we work through this section, think about what each of these portions of Scripture say about being a true disciple of Jesus.

Read Mark 9:30–32. Here again Jesus reminds the disciples that he must die and raise from the dead. **Why do you think the disciples still didn't understand him?**

Read Mark 9:33–50. **What do these verses teach us about what it means to follow Jesus? Why is servant leadership so difficult to practice?**

Read Mark 10:1–16. **What do these verses teach us about obedience and discipleship?**

Read Mark 10:17–31. Compare the response of the rich young man to that of the father of the boy with an unclean spirit in Mark 9:14–29. In some ways it's the same request—each man asks something of Jesus. Each time the obstacle is the same: trust Jesus and surrender. But the response is different. The wavering father asked for help in overcoming his unbelief. But the young man left discouraged because he didn't want to surrender his life to Jesus.

What are you having a hard time surrendering to Jesus?

At the end of our passage for this week is Mark 10:32–52. Mark knows his stuff when it comes to literary arrangement, and this is no exception. The last session ended with a two-part healing of a blind man, while this portion ends with the healing of another blind man. In between, Jesus states three times that he's come not to conquer but to die. Unlike the first blind man who couldn't see clearly at first, Jesus's mission should be completely obvious now.

But right before we finish, Jesus's disciples have one last request for Jesus. Read Mark 10:35–41.

What are James and John asking for? What's Jesus's answer?

James and John were there when Jesus was transfigured. They know what he looks like in power and they want in on the deal, much to their comrades' consternation. Jesus, however, turns the conversation on its head.

Jesus establishes a different metric of greatness —not power, but servitude. We are to be servants

(*diakonos*) as we follow the example of our Lord.

How does Jesus's concept of greatness contrast with the world's?

Name one lie about greatness that you believed until you understood Jesus's perspective.

In what ways do you follow Jesus through serving others?

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

LAST WORD

Service and sacrifice. That's what it looks like to follow Jesus. No power. No glory. No fame. Just humble servanthood and self-sacrifice.

Take a minute or two and identify one person you can go out of your way to serve in the week ahead. It doesn't have to be a grand gesture—in fact it probably shouldn't be. Instead, focus on how you can surrender your own self-interests to serve someone else.

How can you discover needs of those in your community or church? What can you do to meet some of those needs? Think simply and practically. Utilize the resources in your group, then make arrangements to get out there and serve your neighbors.

The promise of glory that Jesus extends to each of his followers comes *after* we follow him in

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. Background: The Transfiguration

The climactic event on the mountain revealed Jesus's divine nature in a physically changed and glorified manner. Some key observations about this impressive moment will help us understand why Mark (and Matthew and Luke) felt it significance enough to include in their stories.

Notice that God spoke, much like he did at Jesus's baptism. His words are almost identical:

Baptism: You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.
Transfiguration: This is my beloved Son; listen to him.

The audience has changed. Whereas the Father was speaking to his Son during his baptism, he was speaking to the disciples at the Transfiguration. He confirmed Jesus's identity and commanded obedience to him. "Listen" implies action.

How are you doing with that? How does your faith in Jesus influence your willingness to mold your life to his commands?

Who attended the Transfiguration? Other than Jesus and his three disciples, we learn that Moses and Elijah appeared in a transfigured state. Moses, the author of the Torah, had long represented the Law. In fact, we still call those first five books of the Bible “the Law of Moses.” When teachers would proclaim, “Moses said,” they would be quoting from the Law.

Likewise, Elijah represented the prophets, that other collection of Hebrew scripture that, along with the Law and Writings, completed the Hebrew Bible. In meeting with Elijah and Moses, Jesus demonstrated his superiority to them: his teaching fulfilled theirs perfectly, his coming sacrifice would supplant the old way of the Law, and he was *the* prophet predicted in Deuteronomy 18:18.

At the transfiguration the glory of the preincarnate Son of God temporarily broke through the limitations of his humanity. In this appearance, Jesus confirmed Peter’s verbal proclamation that he was the Messiah.

How did Peter react? How do you think you would have reacted?

Peter was obviously overwrought watching this scene unfold. He saw Jesus in a completely different way. **In what ways does this vision of Jesus’s divine glory change, enhance, or challenge your usual view of him?**

***2. Peek at the Greek:* diakonos**

While describing his expectations for great disciples, Jesus uses two words in Mark 10:43–

44. The first appears in verse 43 and is translated “servant.” It’s the Greek word *diakonos*, where we get our English “deacon” from. If the disciples want to be great, they must be a servant. The word implies the idea of a higher-powered servant in a household—one who might even be an administrator. It may not be the lordly position the disciples were after, but it’s not a terrible substitute. But then Jesus chooses a different word to drive his point home in verse 44. There, he says the first in the kingdom must be the *doulos*, or “slave,” of all. Unlike a servant, a slave in those days had no standing and no rights. He or she was subject entirely to the whims of his or her master. If the disciples wanted to be first, they would have to submit not just to Jesus but to each other.

A favorite term in modern Christian writing is servant-leader. It’s a popular way of describing how one should lead—with the manner of a servant. But what if we focused on the servant part alone, without the leadership aspect? **How would that change your attitude toward following Christ?**

What words or images does the term “servant” bring to mind? What emotions do you feel thinking about being someone’s servant?

What does it look like in your life to serve Jesus?