



Leader's
edition

your kingdom come

small group studies from Mark's gospel

January—April 2012



Introduction

John Rowland

Many of the stories of Jesus will seem familiar, but don't be surprised if the issues raised cause you to stop and think carefully about the meaning and reality of faith in the 21st Century. And it will be practical. If we say we believe in Jesus, and want to follow Him, then that is life-changing, culture-changing, and daily-decision changing. Like our other small group series, this is no academic exercise; it is not designed simply to inform us, but also to transform us. Mark's Gospel leaves the reader almost breathless; he races from story to story. His favourite words seem to be 'Immediately', 'And then..' or 'Straightaway'. Over and over again he writes about 'The Kingdom' – the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven. Just what did Jesus mean by that little phrase? Does it mean something in the present, or is it all in the future; is it a place, or a state of being; how do you get into it and who belongs; who is the King, and how does he rule; how might it impinge on life now?

Background

Peter Butchers

What follows is the result of a tremendous collaborative project which took place over the autumn of 2011. Thirteen people from UBBC formed two groups to study, reflect, pray through and finally come up with home group themes for these studies. They were all wonderful opportunities to dig deeper into God's word and sense together what the Lord is saying to us as a church, through the gospel of Mark, in 2012. A big thank you to those who journeyed with us these past months to make this possible. I have been thrilled with the way they wrestled with scripture and worked together. We pray that the study notes will not only give us a good 'way in' to Mark's gospel but also help us to see what it means for us, today, to live in God's glorious Kingdom.

Mark is very selective as to what he includes and careful in his use of words and details included. We must pay close attention to what Mark is saying and whenever he includes details which might seem unnecessary, we must ask ourselves, why? Resist the temptation to get too bogged down in the scripture or get side tracked with ideas or themes that aren't important. You'll notice we have placed more attention in the 'what does it look like?' section. This is on purpose. Scripture needs to be understood and then correctly applied. Without the 'doing' of the Word our meetings become study groups rather than growth groups.

OVERVIEW OF MARK

NIV Application Commentary Terry C. Muck

The Traditional view that Mark was written in Rome toward the end of or shortly after the Jewish war is still the most probable setting for this Gospel. Wherever it was composed, Mark should be read as a pastoral response to stressful times. The church faced major crises in the 60s. Christians had to cope with the death of eyewitnesses, which created the need to conserve and stabilize the traditions about Jesus. We learn from Tacitus that the church in Rome was subject to vicious gossip and hostility (see 1 Pe 2:15; 3:13 – 16; 4:12) and needed to fend off attacks from various quarters. Christians had to deflect government suspicion of them as a potentially subversive group. They also had to defend themselves against religious rivals who would foil the church's growth. What did Christians know of the origin of their faith? How could they respond confidently to the misrepresentations without knowing or having an account of what happened to their Founder, who was executed by sentence of a Roman magistrate? Mark compiled a written record of the preaching of Peter and perhaps others to edify the church and to aid it in the task of proclaiming the gospel in the Greco-Roman world.

NIV Application Commentary, NT: Mark. By Garland

One of the geniuses of this Gospel is that it shows how the coming of Jesus Christ helps us focus on beginnings, leaving the endings to God. How? Primarily by showing that Jesus Christ is the New Beginning to end all new beginnings. In one sense, the whole story of the Bible is the story of God's giving first to his chosen people and then the whole creation chance after chance to start over again and get their relationship right with God. Jesus Christ represents the culmination of that process, not by saving everyone once for all, but by giving everyone the chance, forever and ever, to start over again at any time. We can never lose hope because there is always another chance, as offered by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

One of the interesting features of Mark's Gospel is that it starts abruptly and really has no ending. Scholars speculate on the reason for this unique feature. I lean toward the idea that this was intentional on Mark's part — one more way of showing that Jesus, the New Beginning, did not end anything but made it possible for the story of God, working in human history and in the church, to go on and on. The Story is never finished, never ended. We are living the salvation offered in Christ right now, and more and more people are beginning to experience the reality of this each and every day. The ultimate new beginning, of course, is the Resurrection. Death, the ultimate ending, has been defeated by Jesus Christ. Faith ceases to be faith when it is wedded to endings. It is the Resurrection that symbolizes all the new beginnings of the Gospel of Mark, and it is the Resurrection that teaches us that after Jesus Christ, there is no ending, only the hopeful promise of eternal life.

Study 1 – 9th Jan onwards

Announcing the Kingdom Mark 1.1-8

In the very first verse Mark sets out his stall about his gospel: The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. Everything else that follows points to Marks' claim that Jesus is, indeed, the Son of God. In order to set the scene for the coming of the Son of God, Mark begins with the coming of Jesus' cousin, John the baptizer. Mark isn't concerned with the birth narratives like in Matthew and Luke, or with the highfaluting opening themes as in John, but he is straight in with the adult Jesus, ready to serve and usher in God's Kingdom. He introduces us to Jesus by means of John the Baptist. He makes us connect this new work of God, in Jesus, with the prophets who had gone before Him; and in doing so calls us once again to prepare ourselves for the Lord's coming.

The beginning of
the good news
about Jesus the
Messiah, the Son
of God.
Mk 1.1

KEY THOUGHT

As an introduction to Jesus, John shows us the urgency and passion of the Kingdom. We too need to prepare ourselves to meet the King of the Kingdom. We prepare ourselves at the start of our series to have Him impact our lives, but He also wants to impact every area of our lives with the power of His Holy Spirit.

What does it say? *Mark 1.1-8*

1. Mark is very clear as he starts off what kind of gospel it is. What does 1.1-3 tell us, and what does it mean?

Mark wants us to know that the gospel is not just about Jesus, it IS Jesus, the Son of God. So we need to understand that is his 'slant'; to present Jesus as God's Son. The energy and passion and sense of urgency that we see in Mark shows that he is writing with a clear purpose. What does the 'Son of God' mean? Notice how much of Mark is taken up with the passion narrative (the crucifixion). Mark wants us to make the connection between God and our redemption – He has paid the price for us.

2. If Mark is so keen for us to understand who Jesus is, why does he start with John the Baptizer? And what does John say about Jesus?

John sets the context of Jesus. He is the last of the OT prophets heralding Jesus as God's ultimate word for us.

3. What does John preach? What is his message and what does it mean?

John preaches repentance – preparation for the coming of the King. Repentance and faith have always been the marks of the disciple, and here is no exception. We'll see more of preparation shortly.

What does it mean?

in today's world

1. John the Baptist saw that his ministry and that of Jesus would be very different. How are they going to be different and what does it mean?

Water and Spirit. It is not that Jesus will do a similar thing in a different way – this is a divine ordained coming from God, in God's power. Jesus is not another of the same type (prophet, He is wholly different. Note Luke uses "...the Holy Spirit and fire" - the fire of Pentecost.

2. Is John's teaching meant to encourage, warn, challenge or inform?

'Yes' is not a good enough answer! People's answers will vary, and that's fine. Ask people why they think what they do. Talk around their answers. Is their perspective an indication of how they understand the gospel as a whole?

3. Are themes of repentance and faith outdated? What is the 21st C equivalent to 'prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him'?

What does it look like?

in my life

1. Both Mark and John are expectant and excited about Jesus's coming. Very often new Christians are excited and expectant, but then we 'tarnish' a bit and lose our excitement. Why is that? And is there anything about Jesus that still thrills you? *Take your time with this one. It is important! If we do feel a bit lack-lustre, talk about how the bright shine of faith might be restored.*
2. Are there any ways in which you can act like John the Baptist to point people to Jesus? *Be specific – who are those people, how can you do it?*
3. As we begin the studies in Mark we hear the call to prepare ourselves in repentance and faith. What can you do to prepare yourself better to meet with the Lord:

- i. on a day to day basis?

Daily time set aside to meet with the Lord. Get a friend to be accountable to.

- ii. In a church service?

Get there early enough and come into the worship area early enough to quieten yourself

- iii. In this homegroup?

Set aside time to read Mark's gospel, covenant to make an effort to come to church to listen, download the podcast of the sermon, commit yourself to make homegroup a priority. Keep homegroup notes together and in a safe place.

Prayer time

Read Colossians 1.15-17. This is the Jesus who came crashing in to Mark's gospel. It is the Jesus whom John proclaimed, and it is the Jesus who is with us here, this moment, by the presence of His Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist and Jesus have very different approaches. John has an appointed place and people come to him. Jesus on the other hand gathers his new followers and goes to where the people are. John waited, Jesus went. And in these few verses Jesus sets out, by word and action, the nature of the Kingdom that He has come to demonstrate. It is a Kingdom of power and authority. He not only teaches the Kingdom, He demonstrates it.

Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Mk 1.39

KEY THOUGHT

Jesus begins the battle to restore the Kingdom on earth, as it is in heaven. He is baptised, He has called the disciples to follow Him and now he demonstrates that He ministers with the authority of God Himself. It is a work that Jesus began and we, in the power of the Holy Spirit, continue.

Don't forget to spend some time chatting over Sunday's sermon. It is important to follow up thoughts and actions arising from it. The idea of these notes is to help us apply the truths of God's word. If people have already been thinking along these lines, encourage them!

What does it say? *Mark 1.21-39*

1. You can't help but notice the authority of Jesus in this passage. What evidence is there for saying that Jesus is empowered by God Himself?
 In His teaching? In His healings? In the way He delivers from evil?
 In the names that are used to describe Him?

Take your time to look again at the scripture and build up this picture of Jesus as the one who has AUTHORITY. In what others ways is Jesus's authority seen / shown?

2. Jesus seems to have three different arenas to His ministry:
 - a. Public b. Private (just with the disciples) c. Personal (alone).

According to the passage what does He do in each of these arenas?

It is important to note that Jesus spends time with the disciples, teaching, training and preparing them for works of service. However it is vital to understand that 'slipped in' at verse 35 we see Jesus communing alone with the Father. Remember that Jesus did only the things he saw the father doing (see John 5.19). Without time alone in prayer we will never sustain any meaningful ministry either!

What does it mean?

in today's world

1. Often people are nervous to talk about demon possession. Are we to believe that people don't suffer in these ways today? What other 'demons' do we need to exorcize to push back the Kingdom of darkness?

There are many '-isms' that are equally as dark as demon possession – consumerism, fascism, alcoholism etc. etc. These things, and countless others, like them, bind people in much the same way as demon possession. Try to get people thinking about how Jesus has come to bring wholeness and freedom for all people.

2. Verse 31 tells us that Peter's mother in law, once she was healed, served Jesus and the disciples. Does that give us any understanding as to why Jesus healed her?

It is not that Jesus healed her so that she would wait on Him, but that as Jesus brings healing and wholeness to people, they serve Him in response.

3. In most churches today Jesus' authority in teaching is still strong, but why is it that many churches shy away from healing and demon possession?

The spiritual element of faith and the immanence of God among us is still something that many Christians fear. When we let God have the authority in our lives, and allow Him to do supernatural things, it shows that He has the power and we don't. Plus there are many stories of people being spiritually abused by those who abuse their own authority. Yet our faith is not just something that is historic, it is current. He doesn't just want us to read the Bible and try to do what it says; He wants to break into our lives today.

What does it look like?

in my life

1. How is the power and authority of Jesus reflected in:
The world today? The church today? Your life today?
2. Very often humans seek authority for their own gain. Here Jesus uses His authority to bring healing and wholeness. How can we live our lives following this model? In other words, how does what we do as Christians bring healing and wholeness to others?
3. Jesus spent time with the disciples training and equipping them for service. How well do you feel you have been trained and equipped? How might your experience of preparation have been improved?

Prayer time

Read Habakkuk 3.1-2 as an introduction to your prayer time, and spend some time in quietness asking the Lord to bring His rule and authority more into our lives. Remember Jesus still wants to break into our current situations and bring healing and wholeness. Be brave and share with one another how you have prayed. Then pray for those in authority, in the church and in our world.

Study 3 – 13th Feb onwards

Mark 4.35-41

The King of the Kingdom

Don't you care?' is the stark (even irreverent) question that the disciples ask Jesus in this passage. It is a question peoples of every time have asked of God, and maybe it's one you're asking even now - does God really care? Jesus has been healing the crowd and teaching about the Kingdom of God; He has been busy with the crowds, but now Jesus turns

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Mk 4.41

His attention to His disciples. And the answer to their question 'don't you care?' shows us both the humanity and the majesty of Jesus, the Son of God.

KEY THOUGHT

Jesus is interested and truly cares for us. Yes, He loves the whole world, but this story shows us that we are important to Him and that He longs to bring His majesty and power into our lives too.

What does it say?

Mark 4.35-41

1. Why do you think Jesus leaves the crowds? *He must have been tired, the phrase 'just as he was' (verse 36) is an indication that He must have been. He also manages to sleep (on a cushion) in the boat.*
2. What does this teach us about Jesus? *His humanity is a very real part of His ministry. He tires, he eats, he sleeps - He became human with all its glories and challenges. He identifies with our plight.*
3. Consider the storm – try to imagine what happened and how the disciples must have felt in various parts of the story. *These were not men unaccustomed to the water, many of them were fishermen, so it must have been quite a storm to have scared them. How would they have felt with Jesus asleep on his cushion?*
4. What was their response to Jesus' actions in calming the storm? Why was that? *Not only did He teach as one who had authority but 'even the winds and the waves obeyed Him'. It is interesting to note in these chapters the relationship between fear and faith – how are they related – can you have one and not the other?*

What does it mean?

in today's world

1. What does the story tell us about the King and the Kingdom? *Plenty of room for answers. Try not to spiritualise things too quickly! Try and draw out the juxtaposition of the humanity and yet power of the King. The one who really cares about the disciples and also has the power to do something about it.*

2. Jesus is the King who both knows our problems and is able to do something about them. What are some of the things in your experience that you care deeply about, but are UNABLE to do anything about?
3. If this were the only story you had of Jesus, what would you think of Him? How true is this 'snapshot' of who Jesus is?

What does it look like? *in my life*

1. What evidence is there in our lives that the King is present? Be specific!
2. The disciples found Jesus to be caring and present in their physical storm. Very often we have 'storms' of different kinds. What kind of 'storms' do we experience and what are we to believe about Jesus and what can we expect from Him in our times of need? Do you sometimes feel there is a gap between faith, expectation and experience? And do you wonder why?
3. How would you respond to someone who says 'God is too busy for me, He doesn't really care'? What personal evidence do you have for your belief?

Prayer time

Go to <http://alturl.com/n3wcx> to listen together to ***I will praise you in this storm*** by ***Casting Crowns*** –let it lead your prayer time.

I was sure by now, God, that You would have reached down and wiped our tears away, stepped in and saved the day.

But once again, I say AMEN and it's still raining as the thunder rolls

I barely hear You whisper through the rain, "I'm with you" and as Your mercy falls

I raise my hands and praise the God who gives and takes away.

And I'll praise you in this storm and I will lift my hands for You are who You are

no matter where I am and every tear I've cried You hold in your hand

You never left my side and though my heart is torn I will praise You in this storm

I remember when I stumbled in the wind You heard my cry to You

and raised me up again my strength is almost gone how can I carry on

if I can't find You? and as the thunder rolls I barely hear You whisper through the rain

"I'm with you" and as Your mercy falls I raise my hands and praise

the God who gives and takes away

I lift my eyes onto the hills where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth



Study 4 – 27th Feb onwards

A different kind of Kingdom Mark 6.14-29

This week we're studying an unusual story, but one I'm sure you've heard before: the beheading of John the Baptist. It is unusual for many reasons, not least because Mark (who very often leaves out details from his stories) goes into tremendous details so that we understand how important it is for him in his gospel. It is a story of contrasts. In the previous story Jesus sends out the twelve to be bearers of the good news, and in the verse after this story the disciples return bringing news of their mission. The beheading of John comes sandwiched between the two. We are to understand that the Kingdom of God is coming, and even setbacks, like the one we read about here, cannot stop the tide of God's plan from coming in.

King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." Mark 6.14-15

Meanwhile we get an amazing insight into a different kind of kingdom where pride, arrogance and excess, peppered with a little bit of religion is the norm in King Herod's palace.

KEY THOUGHT

The Kingdom of God is on the advance. The contrast here with an earthly King and his kingdom reminds us that what we believe and how we live are intimately related.

What does it say? *Mark 6.14-29*

1. Notice the sections before and after (Mark 6.7-14 and 30). Remember Mark wants to explain who the Jesus, the Christ is, and what His Kingdom is like. Why would Mark put John's execution sandwiched in between?

To show a) that there would be casualties in the Kingdom but its overall mission would be successful and b) to contrast Herod's excess with Jesus' self-sacrificing ministry.

2. Read the story again carefully – can you imagine what kind of occasion it was? What kinds of things indicate that it wasn't a wholesome event?

Power plays, pride, arrogance, alcohol and dancing girls.

3. Herod seemed to be interested in John and in his message (v20) and also in Jesus (Luke 23.8) - why then does Herod have John executed? *Perhaps it*

was Herod's arrogance and wanting to show his power to the other guests that made him want to show them how powerful he was.

What does it mean? *in today's world*

Herod is not unlike people that we meet from time to time. OK, so they might not be Kings, but they feel as though they are kings in the sense that they live as they please. It might even be that they are interested in religious things, like Herod was, but they are not willing to pay the price involved in following Jesus. Others try and live dual lives where they do one thing on a Sunday, and live quite differently the rest of the week. We're all guilty of that - but the question remains, who is the Lord of our lives?

1. What are some of the indications of people who like a 'little bit of religion' but refuse to allow true faith to grow in their lives?

They may go to church every now and then, pray when they are in trouble, give to charity and feel as though they have done 'their bit.'

2. From what we have already studied about the life and work of Jesus in Mark's gospel, what are the differences between Jesus' life and values and those of Herod? *Acts 12.19 tells what happened to Herod in the end!*

What does it look like? *in my life*

1. In what ways can we, even as those who want to follow Jesus, find that we 'bolt on' our faith rather than allow God to penetrate our whole being?
2. Which bits of the teachings of Jesus would you rather were not there!? Go on, be honest and be specific!
3. Look out in the news this week for examples of 'Organised Christianity' in society which has little or nothing to do with following Jesus. Do you feel it is helpful to have this kind of activity, or might it hinder the progress of God's Kingdom? Be prepared to share your views in the group next week.

Prayer time

Bend us, O Lord, where we are hard and cold,
In Your refiner's fire, come purify the gold.
Though suffering comes and evil crouches near,
Still our living God is reigning, He is reigning here.

Graham Kendrick

Study 5 – 12th March onwards

Friends and Foes

Mark 8.1-21

“During those days” (Mk8.1) loosely connects the miracle of the feeding of the four thousand with the healing and teachings of the previous chapters. We are to understand that this event is part of the Kingdom of God coming that Jesus promised. Jesus has crossed over to the region of Decapolis (7.31) and so the recipients of this miracle are sure to be both Jews *and Gentiles*. This might be behind the Pharisees’ demand for a sign (8.11f), as the teaching of Jesus was being taken outside the people of God. The Pharisees intent was to preserve and protect the religion of Israel; Jesus’ mission is to seek and save the lost, whoever and wherever they are. This is, of course, still Jesus’ mission today.

The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.”

Mark 8.11-12

KEY THOUGHT

Jesus demonstrates that His Kingdom is bigger than that of the People of Israel; He has come to reach Gentiles too. His compassion and provision extends to all peoples, everywhere. The Pharisees are judged harshly as they try to preserve and ring-fence their religion for themselves alone. In the same way we are to understand that the Kingdom of God is bigger than the Church.

Don't forget to spend some time chatting over Sunday's sermon. It is important to follow up thoughts and actions arising from it. The idea of these notes is to help us apply the truths of God's word. If people have already been thinking along these lines, encourage them!

What does it say? *Mark 8.1-21*

1. The large crowd gathered to hear Jesus. From where had they come? How long had they been there? And what was Jesus’ reaction to them?

The crowd had been with Jesus three days and had come from far away. The answer is clearly in the text, but it shows the attraction that Jesus had. People wanted to come to him, even if they hadn't thought about what food they would need! Jesus has compassion on them. As well as teaching them about the Kingdom He is concerned for their physical welfare. Are we often more concerned with peoples spiritual condition and overlook their physical needs? Or might there be in some instances a tendency to emphasise the physical and neglect the spiritual dimension? Think hard about the content of your own prayer for folk. Is it largely directed to sickness and health?

2. This is the second feeding narrative in Mark. Skim Mark 6.30-44. In what ways are they similar / different?

There are several differences, but the main point is that Jesus has compassion on those who are 'outside of the fold'. In the first miracle, the crowd are Jewish, in the second they are mostly gentiles. This resonates with our key thought that Jesus' ministry was for all, and not just the 'elect'.

3. The Pharisees demand a sign. (v11) Doesn't feeding four thousand people with a small amount of food count as a sign? What do you think they might have been really questioning? And what sort of answer would have satisfied them? *Were they questioning Jesus' ministry to non-Jews and they wanted a sign to authenticate that, or just that they were jealous of the attention and His authority and were asking for more evidence of what he was teaching?*

What does it mean?

in today's world

1. It is no coincidence that Jesus feeds the crowd with bread, and then warns the disciples about the yeast of the Pharisees. About what exactly is Jesus warning the disciples?

Yeast in the NT is often used as a negative image for evil and corruption. Jesus spread freely and compassionately the bread among the hungry. In contrast, the Pharisees spread doubt and unbelief. They would not believe.

2. Is there a difference between the kind of sign that the Pharisees are demanding and people who want to 'see a sign to know God is real'?

Of course. The Pharisees weren't trying to understand Jesus and just lacked a little faith; they were anti Jesus because they were jealous that He taught with authority and that God was with Him. Jesus' teaching and ministry undermined the power of the Pharisees.

What does it look like?

in my life

1. In what ways can we be like the Pharisees when we 'preserve and protect our religion'? Do we ever make it difficult for those outside the Church to hear about, understand, and respond to Jesus?
2. Jesus had compassion on the crowd. In what ways do we / can we show compassion in our lives and service?
3. Jesus calls us to be His people wherever we find ourselves. Identify three key areas of your life or people where you can intentionally 'be Jesus'. What will you do, how will you act? In the next Group session be prepared to say something about how this might have affected your life this week.

Prayer time

Read Psalm 145.8-9 – use these verses to pray for one another in those areas you have just identified.

Study 6 – 26th March onwards

The Values of the Kingdom Mark 10.35-52

One seemingly obvious question links these two passages. At first glance they may not seem to have anything to do with each other, but the question “what do you want me to do for you?” forces us to consider why it is that Mark wants us to link these two stories. In understanding these two stories and their connectedness, we learn something significant about what’s important in the Kingdom of God.

...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Mark 10.42-44

KEY THOUGHT

Servanthood is at the heart of the Kingdom; because servanthood is on the heart of God Himself. It still is.

What does it say? *Mark 10.35-52*

1. Look briefly at the two stories. In what ways are they similar and in what ways are they different? *There are plenty of both, but the key is that they are different illustrations of the same point – verse 43-45 are the central verses. One story is about ambition, the other is about the need for mercy. The servant Jesus came to serve and not lord His power and glory.*
2. When Jesus refers to ‘cup’ and ‘baptism,’ (v38) what is He meaning? *Compare ‘cup’ to the garden of Gethsemane, and ‘baptism’ to the cross*

What does it mean? *in today’s world*

1. When the brothers made their request about sitting at the right and left of Jesus, do you think Jesus’ reply shows that what *He* meant by glory and what *they* meant were different? Were they talking about the same thing? *For Jesus, His glory is not heaven but the cross. His coming in glory was His sacrifice. Do James and John really want that?!*
2. Why does Jesus answer one request positively, and one negatively? *Both incidents are kind of object lessons, with the teaching coming in the middle (v 42-45). It is another clear indication that Jesus’ Kingdom is one of service and self-sacrifice. The brothers’ request was selfish, the blind man’s was a request for mercy.*



Henri Nouwen is a wonderful modern example of a servant heart. He was a Roman Catholic priest who studied not only theology but also psychology. After several years of teaching pastoral practice he ended up teaching at Yale University, and was widely acclaimed as an eminent theologian with many academic books published. But in December 1985, Nouwen received a 'call' to become part of the Daybreak L'Arche community in Toronto Canada. In August 1986, Nouwen joined the Daybreak community, living and working with six disabled people and their assistants. Nouwen was to remain here until his death in 1996. The journey was not an easy one for Nouwen. He no longer could rely on his books, his lectures or his reputation as the foundations for his self-identity. He was among people who had never read his books, for whom his lectures meant nothing and who had never heard about him. What was important for them was whether he loved them and "whether he was going to be in tonight". Nouwen was helped into a new self-identity through the witness of a severely disabled man, Adam Arnett. Nouwen realised, as he cared for this man every day, that Adam was being used by God to minister to him. Through Adam's vulnerability and reliance on others, God was showing Nouwen what it meant to truly be a servant.

What does it look like? *in my life*

1. In what ways is the story of Henri Nouwen a good illustration of v 43-44?

It is only as we 'lose' our lives that we 'gain' them. It is in denying ourselves that we find true happiness; in service we find the greatest blessing.

2. As we embrace the life of the servant, how do we ensure that we aren't Christian doormats?

The word GENEROSITY is often linked with servanthood. It could be that it throws a new light on Jesus' teaching here.

3. What does generosity mean? Financially with our time, with our love, with our forgiveness, with our best thoughts and with our energies?

4. In what specific ways does the Lord call you to be generous? To whom? What will it mean? What will it cost? *The temptation will be to 'reflect' on these questions – but be brave and ask people to answer them out loud – you go first and encourage the others!*

Prayer time

Re-read verse 43-45 and use them as a basis of your prayer time.

Programme for Spring 2012

1 st	Sun	New year, new Start	
3 rd	Tues	Prayer Evening	
8 th	Sun	AM: Announcing the Kingdom	Mark 1: 1-8
		PM: Life in the Kingdom	Mark 1: 9-13
9 th	Monday onwards Home Group study 1		Mark 1: 1-8
15 th	Sun	Called for the Kingdom	Mark 1: 14-20
17 th	Tues	Church Meeting	
22 nd	Sun	Marks of the Kingdom	Mark 1: 21-39
23 rd	Monday onwards Home Group study 2		Mark 1.21-39
29 th		Subjects of the Kingdom	Mark 2: 13-17
February			
5 th	Sun	Redefining the Kingdom	Mark 2:18 – 3:6
7 th	Tues	Prayer Evening	
12 th	Sun	AM: The Nature of the Kingdom	Mark 4: 26-34
		PM: The King of the Kingdom	Mark 4: 35-41
13 th	Monday onwards Home Group study 3		Mark 4:35-41
19 th	Sun	Subjects of the Kingdom	Mark 5: 21-43
26 th	Sun	A different kind of Kingdom	Mark 6: 14-29
27 th	Monday onwards Home Group study 4		Mark 6:14-29
March			
4 th	Sun	The reaches of the Kingdom	Mark 7: 1-23
6 th	Tues	Prayer Evening	
11 th	Sun	AM: Friends and foes in the Kingdom	Mark 8:1-21
		PM: Life and Death in the Kingdom	Mark 8: 31-38
12 th	Monday onwards Home Group study 5		Mark 8:1-21
18 th	Sun	The Mission of the King	Mark 9: 2-13
20 th	Tues	Church Meeting	
25 th	Sun	The values of the Kingdom	Mark 10: 35-52
26 th	Monday onwards Home Group study 6		Mark 10: 35-52
April			
1 st	Palm Sunday The Coming of the King		Mark 11: 1-11
2 nd -5 th	HOLY WEEK MEDITATIONS		
8 th	EASTER SUNDAY THE KING IS BACK!		Mark 16: 1-8
9 th	Monday onwards Home Group Social events		
A new Home Group series for the Summer will begin during the week of Monday 23rd April onwards			