

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 15
Mark 7-11

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General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Monday

Mark 7

The chapter opens with a dispute about tradition and the commandments of God. Their conversation centres on ceremonial washing and food laws. As we saw in Acts, these issues would become critical in the early church. Despite the distance between their context and ours, I find many of Jesus' words incisive and convicting. *Which of Jesus' critiques stand out for you?*

How do you discern what is tradition and what is a core commandment of God?

Do you have a "religious" trait that is blocking you from participating in what God is doing?

Underneath the exterior of your life, are you letting something fester? Is there something defiled within you? Can you open this part of yourself to God?

At the end of the chapter, Jesus heals a deaf man. Mark uses a word in Aramaic (the language Jesus spoke) instead of Greek (the language the NT was written in). *Why might Mark have chosen to retain Aramaic for this specific word?*

Ephphatha: "Be Opened". Isn't that what we seek, as we study the Bible? Can you turn this Aramaic word into prayer?

Tuesday

Mark 8

Between healings of the deaf (ch7) and the blind (ch8), Jesus asks the disciples: do you have eyes and ears yet cannot perceive? Jesus is so often pulling metaphor from lived experiences. Can you ask God to help you see the meanings in your own life?

Jesus heals a blind man in a two-step process. *What do you make of the initial, incomplete healing?*

With this story of the blind man, the Gospel shifts direction. This passage and the healing of Blind Bart (10:46) bookend an exploration of Jesus' identity and of what it means to be a disciple. Jesus start preparing them for his death, and for the death-to-self they are called to experience. Look for the thematic connections in these chapters.

Who do you say that I am? *How would you answer Jesus?*

Jesus makes it clear that he is not the kind of messiah they were expecting. This is the first time that he explains how he will suffer. Furthermore, he teaches that a similar renunciation is essential to being a disciple. *Are you taking up that cross? Or do you echo Peter's insistence that there must be another way?*

Wednesday

Mark 9

The path of the disciple is not always hard renunciation – the glory, beauty, and presence of God is made clear in this passage. *Have you had a powerful encounter with God? Does the memory still instruct you?*

2 Peter 1:16-18 recounts how this event shaped Peter.

The honest cry of this father has often given me courage: “I believe; help my unbelief.” *Can you put your mixture of belief and unbelief into God’s hands?*

We are so concerned with our status. Jesus’ response becomes a refrain through these chapters: whoever wants to be first must be last and servant of all. *Lord Jesus, train us to walk humbly in your footsteps...*

We hear Jesus encouraging others to heal in his name. Then he speaks of the seriousness of setting up stumbling blocks before others. *How can your actions point to Jesus today?*

Jesus underlines the high stakes of discipleship. *Can you give God the whole of your life?*

Thursday

Mark 10

Twice in two chapters, Jesus speaks of a child as a model disciple. *How might God be encouraging you to be more child-like?*

Are there children you would like to bring into Jesus’ presence? Is there someone or something blocking them? Pray for those kids.

Notice how Jesus both loves and challenges the rich man. *Can you relate to this kind of love?*

Does your relationship to money aid or hinder your life as a disciple?

Read verse 27 slowly, a few times. Are you trying to accomplish things with mortal strength? How can you align yourself with what God is doing? Let Jesus’ words of God-vision sink deep within you.

Jesus reiterates the discipleship theme that the last will be first. We have seen Jesus welcome the small children and challenge the rich man. His journey to the cross becomes the ultimate example of servant leadership.

With the healing of Blind Bart – echoing the healing in ch8 -- the journey to Jerusalem comes to a close.

Friday

Mark 11

Jesus rides, to the acclaim of the crowds, on a humble donkey. I find his sense of drama, metaphor, and living out the Biblical story riveting. *What praises will you raise to Jesus today? Don’t be shy to express your praise!*

Jesus is revolutionary, demanding transformation. As Jesus clears the temple, we see that re-orientation can be fierce and shocking.

God, I am accustomed to how things are. Help me to see the changes you are calling for. Embolden me! How can I take action?

Notice how Jesus offers both a vision of how things should be (My house shall be called...) and a critique (but...).

With the humility this scene evokes, pray for your own church and faith community.

We see opposition to Jesus mounting. *How do you react when your faith meets opposition?*

Here is a compelling and confounding invitation: “Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.”