

DISCUSSION NOTES

AUGUST 28, 2016

Remember to pray as you open your discussion. Ask God to show you more of Himself and more of the grace of Jesus. Ask God for faith to trust Him and for strength to live out the things you learn.

GETTING STARTED

1. Look around the room, and then answer the following question: who among us would make the best king? Be ready to support your answer, and *be willing to laugh* at the responses.

DIGGING IN

2. Read Mark 1:1-4. Why do you think Mark begins his book with this quotation from the Old Testament? What statement is he making about John the Baptist? What statement is he making about Jesus? How does this build the readers' expectations as the story begins?
3. John proclaimed a baptism of repentance, and many people confessed their sins and were baptized (vs. 4-5). Then, we see that Jesus was also baptized, but Jesus had no sins and, therefore, had no need to repent (Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus "has been tempted as we are, yet without sin"). Why was Jesus baptized? (Hint: How might Mark 10:45 shed some light on Jesus aligning himself with sinners through baptism?)
4. What reason is given for Jesus departure into the wilderness (vs. 12)? Does this surprise you or challenge your view of how God works? Why or why not?
5. The opening verses of this book set the stage for the story that is about to unfold. What supernatural elements are included in Mark 1:9-13? What might these say about the importance of Jesus and all that is about to happen?
6. The first words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of Mark are found in Mark 1:15: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." What stands out to you about Jesus' announcement?

LIVING IT OUT

7. Have you ever been baptized as a believer who understood and embraced the gospel (or good news) of Jesus? If so, what was the experience like and what did it mean to you? If not, what might be holding you back from taking this step of faith?
8. Already, Mark has presented Jesus as both God and King. Do you believe this to be true for you? If not, why do you think this is false? If it is true, how should it shape your faith and your life? To what extent do you actively, daily, and personally live with Jesus as your King?
9. Jesus calls people to "repent and believe in the gospel" as the normal way to operate in the kingdom of God. This is the good news which makes Christianity unique among all religions—we can't earn our spirituality through good works, good morals, good values, good vibes, or extreme acts of devotion. Instead, we are to admit that we are sinful, and trust in the goodness of our King. Since this is the basic operating principle of our faith, how might we help one another practice this pattern in our relationships and in our group life this year?

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY PLAN

THE REAP METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY

REAP (Read, Examine, Apply, Pray) is a straightforward way to process what you're reading, either on your own or with a small group of people. This is a flexible plan—you could use it quickly in a 20 minute time span, or you could spend hours digging into the Word with it. Our hope is that you will experience how to study the Bible during your group time, and then try it on your own during the remainder of the week. It may be a little messy, and that's OK. It will get easier with practice. This isn't the only way to study the Bible, but we believe it is a helpful tool to have in your toolbox.

The goal of this kind of Bible study is primarily to grow in faith and obedience, not mere knowledge. Keep that in mind and be attentive each step of the REAP process. Remember to pray as you open the Bible, asking God to encourage, teach, correct, and train you (2 Timothy 3:16) through your time in the Bible, as well as to show you the grace of Jesus.

READ

Read the passage. If you have time, you might read it a few times, silently and out loud, with a pen in hand. Note or underline thoughts that might be significant. Answer the question, "What do I see?" As you're reading, think through these questions:

- What is happening in this passage? What things are emphasized, repeated, related?
- What do I see about God? What is God doing in this passage?
- What do I see about man? What are the people doing?

EXAMINE

Examine the passage. At this point, answer some questions about the meaning of the text. Take time to reflect. Ask yourself these questions, and write down your thoughts:

- How do I think the author wants his audience to respond?
- What do I learn about God's character?
- What wrong beliefs about God and myself do I have?
- What do I like? Is there anything that I don't like?
- Is there anything I don't understand?
- What seems most significant?

APPLY

Apply the passage to your own life. Answer the question, "No matter where I am spiritually, what would it look like for me to live out what I just read?" Some questions to consider might include:

- How do I need to repent or change?
- What truths do I need to believe?
- What false beliefs must I turn from?
- What can I do – empowered by the Holy Spirit – to live out this passage?

PRAY

Pray through the passage and your application, asking God to change your heart and to change your life. Ask that God would be glorified as you seek to apply the passage this week. Ask God to make his love and his grace real to you.

After you finish, share what God taught you with at least one person—your roommate, your spouse, your kids, your friends, or your coworkers. Don't keep what God taught you to yourself.

If you would like help finding a Bible reading plan, ask your group leader or pastor; Or, visit <http://www.esv.org/resources/reading-plans-devotions/>.

The above plan is modified from The Austin Stone and is available at austinstone.org.