



# Series Overview and Guides

2020-2021 ANNUAL THEME | SERIES 4

JANUARY - APRIL

## Objective

*what we hope to see God accomplish in us through this study*

That we deny self, take up our crosses, and follow Jesus.

### STATEMENTS OF THE OBJECTIVE

"Then he started to curse and swear, 'I don't know this man you're talking about!' Immediately a rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered when Jesus had spoken the word to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.' And he broke down and wept."

—Mark 14:71-71

"You are [granted] this ability, but we can't buy it from you, nor can we beat it out of you. We only get it when you decide to put out. You can only do that when you decide to do it."

—Col. Edward L. Hubbard  
*Escape from the Box: The Wonder of Human Potential*

## Premise

*why we are studying this*

Christians throughout history have tended to react to pressing immediacy of life by either completely withdrawing from the world or becoming consumed by stuff of earth. Each response is understandable yet unacceptable for a follower of Jesus. We are called to follow Jesus, not the world. We are called to engage in Christ, not withdraw.

The only solution is to let our eyes become filled with the wonder of Jesus. In His passion and resurrection, the most elaborate Roman triumph is put to shame. The wonder of this changes everything. When God's concerns fill my thoughts, I see His deep concern for humans. When God's concerns are my concerns, following Jesus becomes an honor instead of a burden. When God's concerns guide my thinking, my soul is unruffled by either the press of time or the immediacy of events around me.

### STATEMENTS OF THE PREMISE

"Then he began to teach them that it was necessary for the Son of Man to suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and rise after three days. He spoke openly about this. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning around and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are not thinking about God's concerns but human concerns.'"

—Mark 8:31-33

## Theme

*what the study is about*

In the second half of Mark, Jesus reveals the breathtaking path of discipleship – an immediacy of daily denying self, taking up the cross, and following Him. These requirements for discipleship are all stated in present, continuous tense in Mark's Greek:

- deny (ἀπαρνέομαι) means to disavow any connection with one's own flesh
- take up one's cross, i.e., welcome exposure and minimization
- follow Jesus, especially in obedience.

### STATEMENTS OF THE THEME

"Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, 'If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.'"

—Mark 8: 34

"This is what it means to be a disciple. Discipleship is denying your right to yourself and taking up the cross, accepting these incidents and circumstances which expose pride and conceit, welcoming them, and then following him, doing what he says to do, looking to him for the power."

—Ray Steadman  
*The Ruler Who Serves*



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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SERIES 4 | SESSION 1

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 8:31-38

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus' first prediction of His passion leads directly to the requirements for discipleship, all stated in present, continuous tense in Mark's Greek: deny (ἀπαρνέομαι) is to disavow any connection with – thus the exact opposite of Peter's later performance; take up one's cross, i.e., welcome exposure and minimization; follow Jesus – especially in obedience.

OBJECTIVE

We follow Jesus every day.

ARE YOU FOLLOWING JESUS?

Consider your response to the following questions:

- Where are my thoughts on concerns of earth?
- In what ways am I relying on my past (or my parents' past) decisions instead of every day choosing to follow Jesus?
- What excuses am I making for my flesh instead of denying it?
- In what ways am I focused on being accepted, popular, or included instead of taking up my cross?
- What is one thing I know needs to change now for me to better follow Jesus?

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we faithfully follow our King every day.

## Session 1: True Discipleship

1. Read the Objective and Theme of this series on page 1 of this study guide. Which of the three requirements in the Theme is most challenging for you, and why?
2. Read Mark 8:31-33 together. What specific things did Jesus predict would happen?
  - a. Why did He teach that these things were necessary, that they must happen?
  - b. Why did Peter rebuke Jesus?
  - c. What did Peter miss in Jesus' prediction?
3. What did Jesus state was the core problem in Peter's rebuke?
  - a. Read the Premise of this series on page 1 of this study guide.
  - b. Why do Christians still get distracted by human concerns? Where do these distractions originate? Compare 1 John 2:15-17.
  - c. What should we be doing to maintain our focus on God's concerns?
4. Read Mark 8:34-38.
  - a. Why is it important to understand that denying ourselves to follow Jesus is a continuous action rather than a one-time commitment (such as a renewal vow at some special service)?
  - b. As a disciple of Jesus, have you ever been openly ridiculed or dismissed by your culture because of your beliefs? Explain what happened.
  - c. Do you welcome such treatment? Why or why not?
5. What is your response to Jesus' call to follow Him? What is one thing for you that needs to change? Prayerfully consider the questions in the sidebar.



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SERIES 4 | SESSION 2

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 9:1-42

KEY IDEAS

THEME

This passage deals with true greatness, subtly teasing out our false ideas by working through events where the unseen contains the truth.

- The transfiguration – Jesus is revealed in His true self
- The coming of Elijah – intricacies of prophecy are exposed
- Healing the boy – the unseen torment of the boy is removed by the non-material asking of prayer
- Second passion prediction – the disciples don't understand but try to keep that hidden
- Argument over greatness – their "private" discussion leads to revelation of what God considers great
- Working in Jesus' name – those who do so receive great reward, those who cause others to not follow great loss.

OBJECTIVE

We seek true greatness.

TRUE GREATNESS

"True Greatness is a passionate love for God that demonstrates itself in an unquenchable love and concern for others."

—Tim Kimmel  
*Patents – Avoid the Success Trap*

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we serve one another in love for the glory of God.

## Session 2: True Greatness

1. Read Mark 9:1-13.
  - a. What did this experience mean for Peter, James, and John?
  - b. Why did they ask Jesus about Elijah?
2. Read Mark 9:14-29.
  - a. Do you sometimes ask God for help using "if" in your prayer? Why?
  - b. Discuss Jesus' response in verse 23. How should this encourage us?
  - c. How should our prayers reflect the greatness of God and our absolute limitations?
3. Read Mark 9:30-37.
  - a. What were the disciples arguing about, and why wouldn't they admit it?
  - b. According to verse 35, in what way is true greatness shown? Compare Paul's exhortation in Philippians 2:5-8.
4. Read Mark 9:38-42.
  - a. How should we treat others who are truly doing God's work but are in some way different from us or our church?
  - b. Why should we pray for and applaud those who teach children the Word and ways of God?



SERIES 4 | SESSION 3

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 9:43-10:31

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus recaps the requirements of discipleship, emphasizing that all of the follower's life should be aimed at the treasure of God's kingdom. Mark uses three real stories to illustrate: divorce misses the point; ignoring children misses the point; and materialism misses the point.

OBJECTIVE

We preserve life in following Jesus.

A LITTLE SALT

"Since this verse (9:49) appears only in Mark it must have had special significance for the original readers. If they were Roman Christians, it would have encouraged them to realize that the fires of persecution were part of their calling. Everyone will experience trials. We sometimes say that into every life a little rain must fall. We could change that a little and say that into every life a little salt of testing must fall."

—Thomas L. Constable  
*Notes on Mark*

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we treasure following Jesus above all else.

Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

## Session 3: True Treasure

1. What are some things which you treasure most in this world? Discuss with your group.
2. Read Mark 9:43-50.
  - a. Salt was a useful treasure in Jesus' time, but it could also become useless. How can our hands, feet, and eyes become useless for God?
  - b. What is the eternal effect when we use our hands, feet, and eyes for righteousness?
  - c. What can be the immediate effect of doing so on those around us?
3. Read Mark 10:1-12.
  - a. What is God's intention for marriage?
  - b. What is the false "treasure" which is too often sought for through divorce?
  - c. What are some of the real treasures of a long marriage?
4. Read Mark 10:13-16. What is it about children that is so important for us as Christ followers?
5. Read Mark 10:17-31.
  - a. Why is materialism such a strong force?
  - b. What do most people consider essential now? What does Jesus say is ultimately essential?
  - c. Wealth or poverty status is not the issue. What is the issue?
6. Thinking back to the opening question, is anything keeping you from following Jesus every day?



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SERIES 4 | SESSION 4

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 10:32-52

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus shares His third passion prediction. The disciples still don't understand His suffering and resurrection, just as they still don't see true service and greatness. By contrast, Bartimaeus sees spiritually even before he sees physically.

OBJECTIVE

We see Jesus as Lord.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

"Servants here, they [James and John] dreamed of being masters there. The ten chided and scolded the pair for their ambitions. Jesus didn't. He understood and took the occasion to have the two understand, not that they were wrong to be ambitious, but that they were ambitious for the wrong thing. They wanted a seat of honor; he wanted them to have a post of service: 'But whoever would be great among you must be a servant.' Their ambition was to reach a place, finally, where they could live as passive receivers. Christ, having better things in mind for them than that, was eager for them to live their lives of active engagement in his name and for the benefit of others."

—Glen Edwards  
*"Living in the Active Voice,"  
 Southwestern Journal of Theology*

PRAYER

Pray for each other, that we truly see Jesus as Lord of all.

## Session 4: True Sight

1. Read Mark 10:32-34.
  - a. What does Jesus say is going to happen to Him in Jerusalem?
  - b. Would you be fearful if you were a member of this group? Why?
  - c. What is it that they continue to not see?
  
2. Read Mark 10:35-45.
  - a. On what are James and John focused?
  - b. How do the other ten disciples react? What does that tell you about them?
  - c. Jesus uses this as a teachable moment. What is it that they do not see?
  - d. How does Jesus say that He will model this?
  
3. Read Mark 10:46-52.
  - a. How does blind Bartimaeus show that he truly sees who Jesus is?
  - b. What would change if you saw Jesus through eyes of faith? See Hebrews 11:1.



SERIES 4 | SESSION 5

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 11:1-33

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus displays and teaches on true authority via:

- The triumphal entry – which fulfills prophecy and shows His authority to enter (interesting that Mark doesn't relate this to the Roman general triumph. He saves that for the road to the cross)
- The unfruitful fig tree – which shows His divine authority to judge
- The cleansing of the temple – where His Messianic authority to set right is revealed
- The withered fig tree – which He uses as opportunity to instruct on His authority to be the object of faith & prayer

Sadly, and realistically, the passage closes with Jesus' authority questioned and rejected.

OBJECTIVE

We operate under and trust the true Authority.

ALL AUTHORITY

"Then Jesus came near and said to them 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.'"

—Matthew 28:18

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we fully trust our Lord's authority.

## Session 5: True Authority

1. In 2020, how did a local, state, or national authority make a decision that affected your life? How did you react?
2. Read Mark 11:1-11.
  - a. Under what authority did Jesus humbly operate as He prepared to enter Jerusalem?
  - b. Read Zechariah 9:9 and Psalm 118:25-27. To whom do these writings refer?
3. What authority did Jesus illustrate in verses 12-14?
4. Read Mark 11:15-19.
  - a. What authority did Jesus exercise in these verses?
  - b. Who were the supposed authorities over temple practices? How did they react?
  - c. How do you react when the Holy Spirit convicts you about your own habits or customs?
5. Read verses 20-25.
  - a. What was the lesson of the fruitless fig tree?
  - b. How well do your prayers show faith in God's sovereign authority?
  - c. Why is our willingness to forgive an essential aspect of our prayer lives?
6. In verses 26-33, how did Jesus expose the fruitlessness of the Jewish leaders' authority?



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SERIES 4 | SESSION 6

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 12:1-40

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus is the focus of all history, theology, etc. In the parable of the tenants, Jesus claims that He is the Lord, God the Son. Mark captures a string of reactions, including:

- a trap (based on taxes) about a political situation,
- a trap (using Levirate marriage) on resurrection, and
- a (more sincere) test on greatest commands.

Mark wraps with the inclusio that David's statement proves He is the Lord, God the Son.

OBJECTIVE

We focus on Jesus.

SETTING TRAPS

"When we set traps for those with whom we disagree, we are not focusing on poor misguided souls. We are certainly not focusing on God. We are focusing on self – protecting our power, excusing our sins, destroying our enemies."

—Wayne Braudrick

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we focus on the Lord and not ourselves. Use the back of this page to write prayer requests.

## Session 6: True Focus

1. Describe a time when you had a goal, but along the way you lost focus, even if only for a brief time. What happened?
2. Read Jesus' parable in Mark 12:1-12.
  - a. What was supposed to be the focus of the tenants?
  - b. How can you tell that they lost that focus? What became their focus?
  - c. Why did the Jewish leaders conclude that Jesus told this parable about them?
3. Discuss the two traps described in verses 13-17 and 18-27.
  - a. Why were the Jewish leaders attempting to trap Jesus?
  - b. How did they attempt to trap Jesus?
  - c. How did Jesus turn the focus of the question in each case?
  - d. Discuss one or both of Jesus' answers. What are some applications for us today?
4. Read Mark 12:28-34.
  - a. Was this scribe also trying to trap Jesus? Why, or why not?
  - b. Discuss Jesus' answer. Why are these the greatest commandments?
5. Read Mark 12:35-40.
  - a. What do verses 35-37 tell us about Jesus?
  - b. Contrast the focus of the crowd (v. 37) with the focus of the scribes (vv. 38-40). What was the end result of each?
  - c. What are some ways to ensure that our focus remains on Jesus?



SERIES 4 | SESSION 7

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 13:1-37

KEY IDEAS

THEME

One of the disciples speaks for us all in declaring his wonder over human accomplishments. Jesus sets things straight by revealing something worthy of wonder – the series of events by which He will destroy flimsy and false human kingdoms and establish His great physical kingdom. In response, humans must be ready.

OBJECTIVE

We are alert.

TODAY

"Some years ago, a tourist visited the Castle Villa Asconti along the shores of Lake Como in northern Italy. The old gardener opened the gates and the visitor stepped into the garden, which was perfectly kept. The visitor asked when the owner was last there. He was told, 'Twelve years ago.' Did he ever write? No. Where did he get instructions? From his agent in Milan. Does the master ever come? No. 'But you keep the grounds as though your master was coming back tomorrow.' The old gardener quickly replied, 'Today, sir... Today.'"

—John R. Brokhoff  
*Wrinkled Wrappings*

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that expectantly anticipate His return.

## Session 7: True Readiness

1. Have you ever waited in expectation of something, and then missed it when it happened or arrived? Describe your experience. What did you learn?
2. Read Mark 13:1 – 4.
  - a. What did the disciples want to know?
  - b. How did Jesus answer?
  - c. What did He say is going to happen to His followers?
  - d. What should be their response? (See verses 5, 9, and 11.)
3. Read verses 14-31.
  - a. What are some interpretations of the events in these verses?
  - b. Compare verses 21-22 with 26-27. What are the main differences?
  - c. Read Daniel 7:13-14. What was Jesus stating about Himself in Mark 13:26?
4. Read Mark 13:32-37.
  - a. What did Jesus plainly say about the day and hour of His return?
  - b. Why do people persist in trying to find out, and why do some claim to know?
5. Review verses 9, 23, 33, 35, and 37 of Mark 13.
  - a. What are we commanded to do throughout this section?
  - b. What are effective ways to do this?



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SERIES 4 | SESSION 8

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 14:1-26

KEY IDEAS

THEME

In a movie reminiscent of Haman from the book of Esther, the Jewish religious leaders plot to kill Jesus on their timetable. Against that dark background shine some unforgettable, diamond moments: Jesus' anointing for burial; His betrayal; and the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Jesus institutes two things worthy of remembrance: the Lord's Table & His definition of good deeds: they are noble; do not virtue-signal; are focused on Jesus; represent what one can do; are remembered.

OBJECTIVE

We do good in remembrance of Jesus.

BECOMING VIRTUOUS

"A Christian worldview does not translate to life changed without spiritual practices. As my friend Jonathan Morrow noted in the Barna Gen Z study, 'We become what we do.'

We can't just think our way into becoming virtuous people. We need to practice certain rituals that help form our desires, loves, and character."

—Sean McDowell, PhD  
*Prof. of Christian Apologetics, Biola Univ.*

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that our remembrance of Jesus motivates all we do.

## Session 8: True Remembrance

1. Think of people or events which are good to remember. What are some examples, and what do people do to remember them?
  
2. Read Mark 14:1-9.
  - a. Why did some criticize what the woman did with the ointment?
  
  - b. How did Jesus describe her deed?
  
  - c. Why do we too often criticize others' good deeds? What are some ways to avoid this temptation?
  
3. Read verses 10-21.
  - a. How did Jesus demonstrate His omniscience in this passage?
  
  - b. Why did Judas decide to cooperate with the chief priests?
  
4. In Mark 14:22-26, Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper.
  - a. What is the significance of the Lord's Supper?
  
  - b. Why are rhythms such as the Lord's Supper, prayer, Scripture reading, solitude, tithing, confession, fasting, and worship important to the Christian life?
  
  - c. Why is it important that many of these are also done with other Christians in community?



SERIES 4 | SESSION 9

GROUP DISCUSSION



ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 14:27-15:32

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7, which Peter proudly rejects. That leads to: The agony of Gethsemane; Jesus' betrayal; Jesus' arrest; His illegal trial before the Sanhedrin; His illegal trial before Pilate; His mocking; & Jesus' crucifixion.

In the middle, between the two trials Mark relates, we learn of Peter's denial of Christ. That actually brings hope to the reader because since Jesus was correct on the predictions of scattering & denial, He should prove right in His promise of resurrection.

OBJECTIVE

We trust Jesus with true grit.

A CALLING

"Three bricklayers are asked: 'What are you doing?' The first says, 'I am laying bricks.' The second says, 'I am building a church.' And the third says, 'I am building the house of God.' The first bricklayer has a job. The second has a career. The third has a calling."

—Angela Duckworth

*Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we have the boldness to be associated with Jesus.

## Session 9: True Grit

1. What four predictions did Jesus make in Mark 14:27-31?
2. Read Mark 14:32-42.
  - a. If you had been there, what do you think would have been your response to Jesus' request in verse 34?
  - b. According to verse 38, why is praying important?
  - c. Describe Jesus' prayer. How is it similar to or different than your prayers when faced with a difficult situation?
3. Summarize the trial before the high priest in Mark 14:53-65. What did Jesus plainly assert about Himself?
4. Read Mark 14:66-72.
  - a. Why did Peter deny that he knew Jesus?
  - b. Have you admitted to being a Christ follower in the face of hostile opposition? Describe what happened.
  - c. What will you do when asked if you are a Christ follower?
5. Summarize the trial before Pilate in Mark 15:1-15. Why was Pilate amazed?
6. Read Mark 15:16-32.
  - a. How and why did the Roman soldiers mock Jesus?
  - b. What were some of the prophecies fulfilled in Jesus' death? Review and discuss together.
7. Which of Jesus' four predictions (from question 1) were fulfilled in these passages?



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ANNUAL THEME 2020-2021

WONDER

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 15:33-16:20

KEY IDEAS

THEME

Mark concludes his account with the fulfillment of Jesus' passion – His suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. It's appropriate and poetic that he closes with astonishment (*ekstasis*), since the entire account has been about the wonder of Jesus.

The longer ending of Mark adds three ideas found in other gospels as well: appearances of the resurrected Lord; the great commission; and the ascension.

OBJECTIVE

We testify to true life in Jesus.

JESUS' AUTHORITY

"Mark employs the logic of the triumph to transform Jesus' status as a victim into an assertion of his authority, so that Jesus' execution by Roman agents emerges as a ritualized assertion of Jesus' Davidic kingship. Mark...co-opts Roman spectacle, translating Rome's dominant language, symbols, and practices to the purposes of gospel."

—Allan T. Georgia

*"Translating the Triumph"*

*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*

PRAYER

Pray for each other this week, that we faithfully proclaim the gospel.

## Session 10: True Life

1. Discuss the comparison between a Roman triumph and the end of Mark's gospel. How does Mark show that Jesus is the ultimate victor, and God Almighty?
2. Read Mark 15:33-41.
  - a. How does verse 34 shed light on the nature of Jesus' suffering?
  - b. What is the significance of the temple curtain being torn from top to bottom?
3. In Mark 15:42-47, why is it important to know who Joseph of Arimathea was?
4. Read Luke 23:55-56 and then Mark 16:1-8.
  - a. How did these women know where the tomb was and what was still needed?
  - b. When the women entered the tomb, what did they see? What did they not see? How did they feel?
5. Read Mark 16:9-20.
  - a. Why did the disciples not believe the multiple reports that Jesus was alive?
  - b. What commission did Jesus give to His disciples?
  - c. What is the evidence from Scripture and history that the resurrection of Jesus changed their lives?
6. If your church has a mission statement, review it together. How does it compare with Jesus' commission to His disciples?



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