



## “Who Is In Control?”

### Mark 8

#### Small Group Plan

In our story Peter reveals that he believes Jesus to be the long-awaited political Messiah. He is a king in disguise, a rebel leader, who will throw off Roman tyranny and re-establish God's people as an independent state. But at the very moment that Peter answers “Messiah,” Jesus begins to teach them, not about a victorious political king but about a son of man, who must undergo great suffering, rejection and death.

Jesus’ direction is clear and his purpose is certain. Notice the “must” in verse 31. He speaks “plainly” — perhaps a little too plainly for some. But those who follow must understand who they are following and where he is really going. This is the staggering disclosure for which Jesus has been preparing his disciples. He **is** the Messiah. He **is** the king. But his glory will not be found on a Jewish throne, but on a Roman cross.

What is inevitable for Jesus is unthinkable for Peter.

#### **OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...**

- What is the difference between “consumer faith” and “committed faith”?
- Which do you think is most common today?

#### **LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...**

### **JESUS SPOKE PLAINLY**

#### **Mark 8: 31-32**

<sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this ...

- Notice that Jesus “began” to teach.  
Why does discipleship take a long time to truly see and understand?
- Jesus could have opened the topic of his cross and death at any time.  
Why did he wait until now to speak “plainly” about them?

## **PETER SPOKE ARROGANTLY**

**Mark 8: 32**

<sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

- Why does Peter rebuke Jesus?  
What is Jesus saying that doesn't fit with Peter's view of Messiah?
- How would you handle it if, like Jesus, your faith was challenged by a friend?

## **JESUS REBUKED PETER**

**Mark 8: 33**

<sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

- What Jesus is hearing from Peter he had first heard from Satan.  
What was that original temptation?
- In this story what were the "human concerns" that Jesus refers to?
- Why was it so easy for Peter to substitute politics for discipleship?
- Peter took Jesus aside, but Jesus seems to want the whole group to hear what he has to say. Why?

## **JESUS SPEAKS TO EVERYONE**

**Mark 8: 34-38**

<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

- Jesus wants followers not fans.  
What is the difference?
- Jesus wants to be in control.  
Why doesn't dual-control work?
- Jesus presents "self-denial" as the pathway to discipleship.  
What does it mean?

### **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- Jesus was clear and “plain” about his mission.  
Do you think that most Christians in the world are clear and certain about their purpose and direction in life? Explain.
- Are most people in the world (religious or not) sure of their direction?
- We have the same choice: “*the concerns of God*” or “*human concerns*” (v. 33).  
How would you describe the difference?
- What are the various ways that “self-denial” is misunderstood today?
- Being relieved of the task of self-promotion frees us for what?
- Taking up our cross means dying to ourselves.  
In what area of life do you need help to “die”?
- Close with prayer allowing time for quiet “dying to self.”