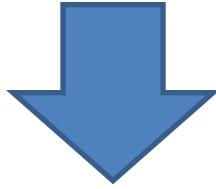


Growth Group **Study**

Mark 1-8

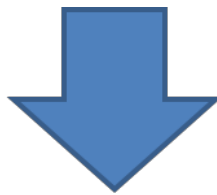
Purpose Statement of Baranduda Community Church

Our purpose is to be a community which glorifies God by actively seeking the fulfilment of the Greatest Commandment in the lives of all people by intentionally engaging in the Great Commission.



Purpose of Growth Groups @ BCC

Colossians 2:6-7 “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”



- receive Christ as Lord

Our Growth Groups are to be active with gospel of Jesus as both Lord and Saviour. GG members are to grow in their gospel conviction and capacity. GG's are to promote and participate and support opportunities for those around them to receive Christ as Lord



- live with Christ as Lord

Our Growth Groups are to be disciple-making communities. In the same way that Jesus gathered a community, shared life with them, taught them from the scriptures, and demonstrated the love of His Father and how to relate to him in all of life, our communities are to aim to do the same.



INTRODUCTION:

MARK 1 - 8 WHO IS THIS MAN?

Early Christian tradition tells us that this gospel was written by John Mark, a citizen of Jerusalem (Acts 12:12) who was later a colleague of Paul, Barnabas (Acts 12:25) and Peter (1 Peter 5:13). Papias, an historian, who wrote between 95 - 120 AD, tells us that Mark was the “interpreter” of Peter. By this he meant that Mark recorded the substance of Peter’s sermons concerning Jesus, most likely from Rome during the mid 60’s AD.

Who is this man? That’s the question with which Mark confronts his readers in these opening eight chapters. Mark puts his premise before his readers in the opening words, asserting that Jesus is not just the long-awaited Jewish Messiah, but the very Son of God. When Peter dramatically reaches this conclusion at the hinge point of the gospel in chapter 8, a new question is posed: “What will it mean to follow Him?”. In this sense, the gospel of Mark served as an evangelistic tract and handbook for those newly converted.

“Mark” is the shortest gospel and there’s good evidence that his was also the first, serving as the core document for both Matthew’s and Luke’s gospels. Mark wrote in Greek for a Gentile audience most likely in Rome, as shown by Mark’s need to explain Jewish traditions and terms, his use of Roman words and their system of time along with the testimony of early witnesses that both Peter and Mark were together in Rome during this period. Since only around 15% of the population could read, and fewer still could afford their own scroll, it is likely that Mark was designed to be read aloud, possibly in a single sitting while the church was gathered together. Mark wrote concisely yet vividly. When read aloud we can appreciate his skilful build-up and release of tension, revealing threads in the narrative that we might otherwise have missed. While he points out much of Jesus’ power as a teacher, he does not major on Jesus’ actual teaching but writes rather of eager crowds,

stunning miracles and terse confrontations. Mark's approach allows us to feel the revolutionary and often disconcerting impact Jesus had on those around Him. Questions abound in this gospel – over 100 of them. Many are directed at Jesus, but even more are asked by Him, including the crucial one: “Who do people say I am?” It is likely that Mark wrote to invoke a response to that most important of questions.

His persuasive, provocative writing style and dramatic portrayal of Jesus leaves little room for the reader to miss his point. His Gentile audience in Rome would no doubt have been drawn into the story and forced to draw a conclusion. If they agreed with their countryman who declared at the foot of the cross, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” (15:39), they would then need to determine what to do with Him. The same challenge remains for all who read Mark today.



Study 1 – Mark 1 : 1-13

Main idea:

A sneak peek - Jesus, the unique and long promised Son of God come to bring renewal and restoration.

Starting up:

In what way or ways is the gospel message “good news”?

Read: Mark 1 : 1-13

1. Mark has a goal - to prove the identity of Jesus. What do you learn about Jesus in the verses that follow?
 - What evidence does Mark supply to prove his point about Jesus' identity? (the following verses will help - 2-4; 7,8; 9-11; 12,13)

- Two aspects of the good news - comfort in one and purification in the other. Which do you think John thought it was? Why?

2. John was the first prophet in 400 years and each of the gospels begin with him. What do you learn about John in these verses?

- To baptize Jews would have been highly offensive. Baptism of this sort was reserved for Gentiles. What do you think John was saying to his countrymen by calling them to baptism?

- What attitude would it require to submit to his baptism?

- If God was to come to purify His people, what might this involve? What might it involve for us today?

- God's cleansing and forgiveness are sometimes not prized today as greatly as John would have expected. Why might this be?

- John was preparing for the first coming of the Christ. Today we are preparing for the second coming. If you were John, what would be your message to the Christian community in Australia today? Without being too critical, what would it be to us at Baranduda Community Church? What would it be to yourself?

Application:

Repentance for renewal, patience with God's purposes, cling to Jesus who does His work FOR us.



Study 2 – Mark 1 : 14-45

Main idea:

The immediacy, power, ease but also clear mission mindedness of Jesus' ministry.

Starting up:

Thinking broadly, what will life look like when the kingdom of God comes in its fullness?

Read: Mark 1 : 14-34

1. What signs of a broken world can you see in this passage? What other signs do you recall in the gospel accounts as a whole?

- What signs can you see in these verses that indicate that the kingdom of God had come near?

- Why does entry into the kingdom require disciples to “fish”? In what sense is evangelism like “fishing”?

- Jesus consistently refuses people or demons to speak of who He is. Why do you think this could be?

Read: Mark 1 : 35-45

2. Jesus is thoroughly mission minded. How have you seen that so far? Where do you see it in this passage?

- How do you account for Jesus' shift in priorities in verse 38? What can you conclude about His priorities from these verses?
- What are the dangers for Jesus in pursuing His healing ministry? Why do you think He heals if this is not His main aim?
- What aspects of verse 41 raise questions for you? Jesus is not indignant at the leper, so what has prompted His anger?
- Jesus can easily heal without physical contact. Why then do you imagine He chooses to touch the leper?

3. If God has always been King, what change was Jesus bringing?
Why is this good news?

- Jesus has a focused kingdom mission. In what ways will our pursuit of mission differ from His? In what ways will our pursuit of kingdom mission be similar to His?

- What changes might this require of us?

Application:

Confidence because Jesus is fully able to achieve his plans, patience because we don't see things happen in the same way, clear kingdom minded priorities.



Study 3 – Mark 2 : 1 – 3 : 6

Main idea:

The stunning mission claims of Jesus WILL bring conflict.

Starting up:

The gospel message itself brings conflict. How do you typically respond to this?

In the following passage there are five conflict episodes which each have the same structure:

- Jesus says or does something startling
- His opponents are offended and challenge Him
- He says or does something in response that sheds light on His identity and mission

Read: Mark 2 : 1-12

1. Identify the three parts of the conflict.

- In verse 9, which of the two is easiest to say? If they are both equally easy, why does Jesus choose to perform the healing?

- What does Jesus reveal about His mission on the one hand and identity on the other?

- Why does Jesus refer to Himself as the Son of Man (see Daniel 7:13,14)

Break into pairs.

2. Consider the following episodes in pairs and identify the three parts of the conflict:
 - 2:13-17

- 2:18-22

- 2:23-28

3. What do you learn about Jesus' mission in each?

Return to main group and discuss.

4. Jesus has not come to call the righteous, but sinners. How might His mission challenge our attitudes?

5. In the second episode, if the old wine skins are traditional expectations, how might we today be in danger of needlessly constraining the gospel? What cultural expectations of normal Christian life could do this?

6. Jesus is not saying that His position gives Him the right to break laws. What is He saying?

Read Mark 3 : 1-6 together.

7. What signs in this passage suggest that the tension is growing?

- The gospel WILL bring conflict. What conflict have you most recently experienced?

- What attitudes to God and to others will help you be faithful in the midst of conflict?

Application:

Be ready and don't fear or shrink from conflict; provoke reaction or cope with it? Faithful in our generation.



Study 4 – Mark 3 : 7-35

Main idea:

Robbing Satan's kingdom

Read Mark 3 : 7– 9

1. Jesus had met with a steadily growing conflict in Galilee. In this passage He withdraws. Given that this is not because of simple fear, what could be the cause of it?

Read Mark 3 : 20-28

2. What can you learn about Jesus' opposition in these verses?

- In verses 28 and 29 Jesus warns that these men are close to committing an unforgiveable sin. What kind of sin could possibly be too much to be covered by the death of Jesus?

- Why might Jesus call this a “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?”

Red Mark 3 : 31-35

3. Although we think that Mary should have known better, what have you already learned about Jesus’ family? (see John 7:5) What family dynamics may have caused his brothers to be dismissive of Jesus?



Study 5 – Mark 4 : 1–34

Main idea:

The progress of the kingdom will be certain and will take place naturally as the Word reveals the heart of the hearer.

Starting up:

Listening is hard work and some are harder to listen to than others! What qualities does a person need to have for you to listen carefully to a serious presentation?

1. The subject of Jesus' parables is the "Kingdom of God", its progress and its future. Some people think the parables were simple stories designed to make the point easier to grasp.

Read Mark 4 : 1–9 and answer the following:

- What's the context and the audience?

- What's the surprising reason for the parables?

Optional – Break into pairs or small groups

Each group takes one of the following parables. Consider the questions below and report back to the group:

- verses 21-25
- verses 26-29
- verses 30-32

3. What are the similarities between this and the parable of the sower?

4. What is the warning or encouragement about the kingdom?

In main group, read 4 : 10-20 again.

5. Is the parable of the sower warning or encouragement?

- Verse 12 is a quote from Isaiah 6 and describes God's judgment on the nation. How would you summarize the judgment?

- Why do you think the disciples get the inside scoop? (consider also verses 33 and 34) How does this show the importance of the way we listen?

- It is said that Jesus' parables were designed to diagnose His audience according to their response. What various responses would this parable have caused?



Study 6 – Mark 4 : 35 – 6 : 6

Main idea:

The compassion of Jesus and the importance of faith in seeing and sharing in the kingdom's progress.

Starting up:

Why does our faith matter to God?

Read the whole of Chapter 5 together and then break into pairs to answer Q 1.

1. Everyday life in a broken world is filled with hardship and pain. In chapter 5 there are three suffering characters. What are their circumstances and why do they arouse our pity?

- What can we learn from Jesus' action in doing this?

2. What do you learn about Jesus in verses 35-43?

- Jesus is selective in the disciples He takes with Him and selective in those He allows into the child's room. On what basis do you think He has made these choices?

- It is clear that faith is the central idea in these episodes. What conclusions should we draw about faith from these?

Read 6 : 1-6

3. Remember the disbelief of Jesus' family in chapter 3. What causes the lack of faith among the people in this episode?

- What simple human factors would have made faith for them difficult? What warning should we take from this about our own Christian life and ministry?



Study 7 – Mark 6 : 7-56

Main idea:

The inescapable context in which the kingdom grows - political realities. On either side, progress of the mission but in the central periscope the shadow of suffering to come.

Starting up:

Christian life is not your typical fairy tale. True or false? Why or why not?

1. It's a long time since we last heard about John the Baptist but he suddenly reappears in this chapter. What do you know about John so far?

Read Mark 6 : 21-28

3. Judging by these verses, who is responsible for the death of John?
What combination of factors brought it about?

- Although at one level Herod looked like a man interested in the things of God, why should we be wary of people like him today?
- How MIGHT John function as a warning to Jesus? Consider Matthew 17:10-13. How is he a warning to us?



Study 8 – Mark 7 : 1-37

Main idea:

When the first are last – Jesus' compassion on those further afield.

Starting up:

Is it easier for us to support local evangelism or overseas mission?
Why?

Read Mark 7 : 24-32

In the previous episode, Jesus destroyed the distinction between clean and unclean food. In this section he will wipe out the distinction between clean and unclean people!

1. What can you find out about the context of these two episodes?

- Tyre and the Decapolis are Gentile territory. Why might Jesus NOT have wanted people to know He was there?

There are a number of reasons in this episode why a Jewish rabbi would have refused this woman - FIRSTLY she was a woman AND a Gentile AND from a city which had been bitter enemies of the Jews AND the child was suffering from an UNCLEAN Spirit.

- What reason does Jesus initially give for refusing? What does this mean? (see Matthew 15:24 for more on Jesus' mission)

- Jesus was careful to keep His ministry only to the "lost sheep of Israel. Why? - especially when He would later send His disciples to the nations.

- How does the reply Jesus gives (which may have been playful) provide a test of the woman's faith?

Read Mark 7 : 31-37

2. What details does Mark draw our attention to in this episode? How do the details support the truthfulness of the account?

- Although saliva was a common medical agent in the ancient world, Jesus actions still seem strange. Why would they have been appropriate for a man who was both deaf and stammering?

- How can we more intentionally support evangelism beyond our local area? Are there opportunities in our area to reach the nations?

Application:

Developing a heart for the world. Clear mission minded priorities.
Patience as areas that were hard become opportunities over time.



Study 9 – Mark 8 : 1-26

Main idea:

The blinding reality of sin in our capacity to see and trust Jesus.

Starting up:

In what ways is Christian conversion a process? When does it finish?

Read Mark 8 : 1-10

1. Discipleship is learning from Jesus. What miracles would Jesus' disciples have seen by this stage to grow their faith?

Read Mark 8 : 11-21

2. Although it may seem amazing to us, the disciples still don't get it. What things show that in this episode?

- In Jewish society yeast was a symbol of the spreading impact of evil. How is bad teaching like yeast? What examples of this are you aware of that “blind” people?

Read Mark 8 : 22-26

3. What are some unusual aspects of this episode? If Jesus didn't get it wrong the first time, why the two stage miracle? How is this man an illustration of what is happening with the disciples?

- Although the Spirit is at work in them in verses 17- 18, Jesus describes the disciples as men whose "hearts are hardened". Are genuine Christians ever like this?

- What implications do these things have for Christian life? (here are some categories to consider below)
 - a. our expectations of others?

b. the work of evangelism and follow-up?

c. our attitude in the midst of conflict with fellow believers?

d. the way we pray?

Application:

Humility. Awareness that we, like others, will be slower to grow than we should. Gratitude that Jesus is patient with us and does open our eyes.



Study 10 – Mark 8 : 27 – 9 : 1

Main idea:

A suffering Christ means suffering for His people if they are to be faithful to Him.

Starting up:

The kind of Messiah Jesus is will determine lots about the nature of Christian life. If Jesus were a slick tele-evangelist style of Messiah, what would Christian life be like?

Read Mark 8 : 27-33

1. Imagine you had joined Jesus' band for the day. What things do you learn about Him from this episode?

Read Mark 8 : 33-38

2. According to Jesus, what will the character of Christian life be like and what temptations will it include?

- The cross in the first century was a symbol of death. Knowing this, what do you think Jesus means in verse 34, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must take up their cross....”?
- What does He mean in verse 35 “to lose your life for me and for the gospel...”? In what sense does becoming a Christian mean losing your life?

- Christian life is family life. How can we be a stumbling block to one another in living as followers of a suffering Messiah? How can we help each other?

Application:

The need for continual repentance; love for Jesus that makes us willing to stand for Him and not be ashamed. Circumstances in which we might be tempted to be otherwise. Ability to evaluate when we are deliberately evading the suffering that is rightly ours.