

Bible Studies from the Gospel of Mark

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1. THE START OF GLAD TIDINGS (Mark.1:1-11)

BACKGROUND: John the Baptist wore the same clothing as the prophet Elijah in the Old Testament (compare verse 6, **2 Kings 1:8**). Grasshoppers and honey were normal food in the wilderness. Taking off someone's shoes was the work of the lowest servant or slave.

1. What kind of things does a person learn if he spends all his youth alone in a wilderness? (Imagine how John's everyday life was in the wilderness?)
 - At the time of this passage, John was already about 30 years old. Why didn't he pursue the things young men of his age usually want?
 - Why wasn't John doing his ministry in Jerusalem, the capital?
 - What was the secret of John's popularity?

1. Think of various reasons why people wanted to be baptized with John's baptism (vs.4-5)?
 - Why did people have to confess their sins publicly before John agreed to baptize them (vs.5)?
 - Do you think you would let yourself be baptized if you had to publicly confess your sins first?
 - How did the ministry of John prepare the way for Jesus (vs.2-4)? (Why was the ministry of John necessary before Jesus started his own ministry?)

1. How can we prepare our hearts for Jesus to enter (vs.3)?
 - How can we prepare the way for Jesus to enter into the lives of other people (for example. our loved ones)?

1. Why didn't popularity make John proud?
 - Why didn't John consider himself worthy even to untie the sandals of the coming Messiah?

1. What is the difference between the baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus (i.e. the Christian baptism)? (What does it mean that Jesus baptizes his followers with the Holy Spirit (vs.8)?)
 - Based on this passage, why is baptism necessary for salvation?

1. Why did Jesus want to be baptized with the baptism of repentance even though he didn't have anything to repent of?

2. How was the triune God present during the baptism of Jesus?
 - Why did God the Father want to confess his love to his Son directly from heaven at the moment of his baptism (vs.11)?

1. When the Heavenly Father looks at you this very moment, do you think he can say the words of verse 11 to you, too? Give your reasons.

GLAD TIDINGS: The words in verse 11 recall the words God said to Abraham: "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go and sacrifice him on the mountain..." (**Gen.22:2**). The baptism of Jesus was the first step on his way to the cross.

2. A HEALTHY SOUL IN A HEALTHY BODY (Mark.2:1-12)

BACKGROUND: At the time of Jesus the houses had flat roofs, which were made of limestone and tiles; they were somewhat easier to break than roofs in our day are. There was a stairway outside the house that led into the roof. If a person was paralyzed, it was usually due to a brain hemorrhage, which happened in middle age or later. The Son of Man means Jesus himself.

1. Imagine the everyday life of the paralyzed man. What kind of difficulties did he have to face? (What kind of care did the man need? How did his human relations change because of the illness? What were his plans/dreams for the future? What was the meaning of his life?)
 - Imagine the everyday life of the person who had to care for this paralyzed man. What would it be like?
1. In verse 5 it becomes clear that this man was a sinner. What sins can a person commit even when unable to move himself?
 - Discuss: Does an illness make us better or worse as human beings?
1. Who were the people who carried the paralyzed man? Discuss different possibilities.
 - What made these people as determined as verses 3-4 show them to be?
 - Imagine step-by-step starting from home what these people had to do in order to place their friend before Jesus. (What was easy, what was difficult?)
1. The friends had brought the paralyzed man to Jesus so that he could be healed. Why did Jesus first forgive him his sins instead? (Why did Jesus proceed in this order?)
 - What did the forgiveness of sins mean to the paralyzed man?
1. Imagine that you were bringing your worst problem to Jesus, and instead of solving it he says: "My son/ my daughter, your sins are forgiven!" Would you be sad or glad?
 - If you could choose, what would you take: a good conscience with your problems unsolved? Or your problems solved but with your conscience aching?
 - When the heart of the paralyzed man was lightened because his sins were forgiven, how did his attitude toward his illness change?
1. Whose faith is Jesus referring to in verse 5? Look carefully at the sentence structure.
 - At which moment did the paralyzed man start to believe in Jesus?
1. Answer the question that Jesus poses in verse 9. (What did it cost Jesus to heal the man? What did it cost him to forgive the sins of this man?)
2. This text is talking not only about faith but also about unbelief. Why didn't the teachers of law want to believe that Jesus was able to forgive sins?
3. How can we carry to Jesus our loved ones, who are not able or do not want to come to him by themselves? (Where can they meet Jesus?)
4. Jesus has led you to this Bible study in order to be able to say to you: "My son/ my daughter, your sins are forgiven." What do these words mean to you in your present

situation?

3. A TRAP SET FOR JESUS (Mark.3:1-6)

BACKGROUND: The first dispute over Sabbath between Jesus and his opponents is described in [Mark.2:23-28](#). This is the second one. Keeping the Sabbath in the smallest details was according to the Pharisees the condition both for the Messiah's coming and for a person's salvation.

1. How would a withered hand affect the everyday life of this man? (His work, his finances, his family, his relationship with God? What work would be available at that time for a man who could only use one hand?)
 - From verse 5 we understand that the hand of this man was originally normal. What do you think this man went through when his hand withered, possibly due to an accident?
 - What impression do you get about the character of this man through this text?

1. What was the atmosphere like in the synagogue that morning?
 - We can infer from the text that the man didn't come to the synagogue to be healed. What did he come for?
 - Why didn't this man ask Jesus for help?
 - Compare the motives of this man and the Pharisees in coming to the synagogue that Sabbath.

1. Why didn't the Pharisees accuse Jesus by saying to his face what they thought was wrong with him?
 - What did the Pharisees think about the man whose hand was withered?

1. Why did Jesus ask the man to stand up in front of everybody instead of healing him right where he was?
 - Do you think the man would have stood up at just any person's request?

1. In verse 4 Jesus cleverly shows his own intentions and those of his opponents. What does Jesus mean here by such expressions as "to save life or to kill"? (How would the behavior of the Pharisees have killed this man? How did Jesus save his life?)

2. The gospels very seldom mention Jesus' anger. Why was Jesus both angry and sad in this situation (vs.5)?

3. As the man told the muscles of his hand to stretch out, what was he believing about Jesus?
 - What similar step of faith does Jesus expect from you today?

1. What was it in the words and deeds of Jesus that angered the Pharisees so much that they started to plan murdering him?
 - What was wrong with the Pharisees' faith in God, as shown in this incident?

1. Why was healing this man so important to Jesus that he put his own life at risk (vs.4)?
 - Why, though he only helped and saved people (verse 4), was Jesus killed?

GLAD TIDINGS: The concept of the Sabbath as taught by Jesus differed greatly from the Pharisees' teaching. For the Pharisees it meant the law that human beings have to fulfill in order to

be saved. For Jesus it was a type (picture) of the Gospel - the rest that God will give to those who believe in the forgiveness of their sins ([Hebrews 4:9-10](#)).

4. IN THE MIDST OF A STORM (Mark.4:35-41)

BACKGROUND: There were four professional fishermen among the disciples. They knew Lake Galilee like the backs of their own hands.

1. Lake Galilee is 20x12 kilometers in size. How long approximately does it take to sail across such a lake?
 - What would you think if someone asked you to sail across such a lake near nightfall?
 - Why didn't the disciples protest at all when Jesus asked them to cross the lake at that time of the day?

1. What makes a person able to sleep in a tossing boat in the middle of a storm? Think of various explanations. (What does it reveal about his relationship with God and his relationship with his own death?)

2. What steps do you think the disciples took to try to keep the boat afloat?
 - Why couldn't the disciples believe in the power of God in this situation?

1. Have you been in a situation where you felt as if Jesus were asleep and didn't care a bit that you and your loved ones were about to "drown" (vs.38)? Tell about it.
 - Verse 38 is in fact a prayer. What can we learn about prayer through this verse?

1. Why were the disciples surprised when they got the help they needed?
 - How were you like or unlike the disciples when you last met a serious crisis?

1. What kind of help should we hope for from Jesus in our crisis?

2. Is it easy or difficult for you to believe that the wind and storm really obeyed Jesus' command (vs.39)? Give your reasons.
 - Jesus is standing at this moment in the midst of your storm and saying: "Quiet, be still!" What do his words mean in your situation?

1. How did the disciples feel when they heard the words in verse 40 from Jesus' mouth?
 - If Jesus would say to you the same thing he said to his disciples, how would you react (vs.40)?

1. How did these two fears of the disciples differ from each other: the fear of death and the fear after Jesus had performed his miracle (vs.40-41)?

2. Why does Jesus help even those who are lacking faith?
 - How did the faith of the disciples change through this experience?
 - How would you like your faith to change though the crisis you are experiencing now?

GLAD TIDINGS: The disciples were saved from drowning, but Jesus himself was not. To be nailed to a cross meant a death by suffocating exactly as the death by drowning did. The leader may read **Psalms 69:1-2 and 14-15**. This is one of the Psalms that describes the suffering of Jesus on the

cross. This is the price Jesus had to pay in order to save us from drowning in the lake of fire (Rev.20:14).

5. A HOPELESS CASE (Mark.5:1-20)

BACKGROUND: The man in this text is probably a pagan, because he was living on the eastern side of Lake Galilee. Pagans raised pigs and ate them, which was not allowed for the Jews. Evil spirits often take possession of a person through idol worship. A legion was an equivalent of 6000 soldiers in Roman army.

1. The man with an evil spirit had relatives (vs.19). What had they tried to do to save this man from his horrible fate?
 - What was the worst thing in this situation for his wife, children and parents (vs.3-5)?
 - What kinds of people in our time are thought to be hopeless cases to the same degree as the man in the text?

1. Which of the things in verses 3-7 did the man do of his own will, and which of them did the evil spirits force him to do?
 - What did this man want from Jesus (vs.6-7)? (What contradiction can you see in the behavior of this man?)

1. What did the man know about Jesus beforehand, and where did he get this information (vs.7)?

2. What might be the reason 6000 evil spirits could enter one single human being (vs.9)?
 - What does the conversation between Jesus and the spirits reveal to us about the power structure in the unseen world (vs.8-13)?
 - Why did Jesus allow the evil spirits to do what they asked?
 - Perhaps there are people in this Bible study who are afraid of spirits, ghosts or darkness. What consolation can this passage give to such a person?

1. Why didn't the Gerasenes rejoice about their neighbor becoming well again (vs.14-17)?
 - How much would 2000 pigs cost in our day?
 - How would you react if Jesus destroyed all your possessions in order to save one human being?

1. How many things changed in the life of this man?
 - After meeting Jesus, what do you suppose he thought about the years that he had spent in the caves? (How did Jesus change this man's life from a minus to a big plus?)

1. Why didn't Jesus want this man to follow him (vs.18-19)?
 - Why did Jesus command this pagan to tell about the miracle, although he often asked Jews not to do it?

1. Jesus speaks the words in verse 19 to all of us today. What do they mean to you in your present situation? (What are the great things the Lord would like you to tell to your relatives?)
 - According to this text, how should you treat the person you regard as a hopeless case?

1. Jesus won this contest with Satan with points 10-0. Why then did he lose his case contest in Calvary?

GLAD TIDINGS: The leader may read [Isaiah 52:14](#) and [53:3](#). Jesus on the cross had this in common with the Gerasene man: at that moment a legion of evil spirits was allowed to torture him. This happened because at that moment Jesus took the blame for our sins before God.

6. WHEN THE WORST POSSIBLE THING HAPPENS (Mark.5:21-24, 35-43)

BACKGROUND: The synagogue ruler was usually elected from among the most respectful persons of the town. All the other synagogue rulers in the gospels were Jesus' opponents except Jairus. This man had only this one child (Luke 8:42).

1. Imagine the everyday life of this small family after this long awaited child was born.
2. What can happen to the relationship between the parents when a child becomes ill? Think of various possibilities.
 - What do you think happened in Jairus' relation with God after his daughter took ill?
1. Why did Jairus consent to ask help from a man who was not popular in the circles in which he was moving?
 - What do we learn about Jairus by the way he asks Jesus for help (vs.22-23)?
1. What happened in the heart of the father when he heard the bad news from home (vs.35)?
 - If you have ever felt that it is no use bothering Jesus any more, when did it happen?
1. Why did Jesus tell Jairus not to fear even though the worst possible thing had happened to him (vs.36)?
 - What are you most afraid of in the world? (You can answer in your heart.)
 - How would you react if Jesus told you not to be afraid when the worst possible thing had just happened to you?
1. Jesus tells you today: "Don't be afraid, just believe." What do these words mean to you in your present situation?
 - What could Jairus have believed even after the girl had died?
 - What would Jairus have done, if he hadn't believed in Jesus at all?
1. The wife of Jairus had seen her child die while her husband was away. What do you think was her mental state when Jesus and her husband came into the house?
 - Funeral preparations were already underway when Jesus arrived in the house of Jairus. What did he want to say to the guests through his words recorded in verse 39?
1. Read carefully how Jesus raised the girl from the dead (vs.41-43). Which details do you find especially interesting?
2. Why did Jesus give strict orders not to tell anyone about this miracle, although it would have been good PR for his ministry?
3. What impact did this incident have on the girl herself? How did it affect her future?
 - How did the life of the parents change after this incident?
 - What did this family think about the rumors of the death and resurrection of Jesus when they heard them afterwards?

GLAD TIDINGS: "Don't be afraid; just believe" means in the mouth of Jesus: "Leave this thing to

me. I can take care of it." Jesus himself was afraid of only one thing, namely separation from his Father. So much was he afraid of it that he was sweating blood in Gethsemane. In this way he showed us that separation from God (that is: hell) is the only thing we should be afraid of. Everything else he can and will change to a blessing in the lives of those who believe in him.

7. A WOMAN WHO HAD LOST HER IDENTITY AS A WOMAN (Mark.5:25-34)

BACKGROUND: According to the Mosaic Law a woman was considered religiously unclean during menstruation. Nobody was allowed to touch either her or a thing she had touched. Neither was she allowed to enter the temple in that state (Lev.15).

1. Supposing the woman of the text was around her thirties or forties, she had become ill while still quite young. What consequences would this illness have to her life if she were married? What if she weren't married?
 - What consequences did continual bleeding have to her physical state?
 - What effect does an illness like that have on one's self-image?

1. What do you think this woman thought about God after having conceived an illness like this in her young age?
 - How had her relationship with God possibly changed during the long years of illness?

1. In verse 26 it says that at one time this woman had some property. Think of different possibilities where she had the money from and for what use it was originally meant.

2. We can imagine that the gynecologists of the day were not very professional. Why was becoming well so important to this woman that she was willing to take such treatments and even use all her money for such "doctors"?
 - How do you think the woman felt about doctors and healers of all kind at this point of her life (vs.26)?
 - What was the difference between Jesus and other healers?

1. How could this woman who was disappointed with other healers, be so sure that touching Jesus' clothing would make her well (vs.28)?
 - Are you as sure as this woman that Jesus could easily solve your worst problem?

1. Why didn't this woman ask Jesus for help as other sick people did?
 - Why did the woman choose touching as the means of becoming well?

1. How could Jesus know that someone had gently touched his robe?
 - Why didn't Jesus let the woman go home without talking to her?

1. How do you think the woman felt when she heard the question of Jesus in verse 30?
 - What did the woman see in the eyes of Jesus when he turned around and looked in her face (vs.32)?

1. The woman didn't intend to speak even one word to Jesus, and she ended up telling him the whole truth. What did she say (vs.33)?
 - Have you ever told Jesus in so many words the whole truth about yourself? If not, why?

1. Verse 34 can be translated in two ways: "Your faith has healed you." Or: "Your faith has saved you." Why did Jesus want to say these particular words to this woman?

- Why did Jesus call this woman his daughter although they probably were approximately the same age?

GLAD TIDINGS: Jesus, too, became ritually unclean when his blood flowed from the flogging and crucifixion. Everyone who touched him became unclean. This was the price Jesus had to pay for saving this woman and for saving you!

8. HEAD ON A TRAY (Mark.6:16-29)

BACKGROUND: Herod was actually no king but only a tetrarch that reigned over a part of Palestine by permission of the Romans. When the Jewish historian Josephus writes about the marriages of Herod, he tells of the same facts as the Bible. He also mentions the name of the young daughter of Herodias; she was called Salome. John the Baptist was about 30 years of age at the time of his arrest.

1. Think of various reasons why Herod wanted to rob his brother of his wife (vs.17-18)?
 - Think of possible reasons why Herodias had wanted to marry Herod and leave her husband.

1. Why did John the Baptist want to meddle with the private life of Herod although he certainly knew it was dangerous?
 - How would you react if someone came to rebuke you about your private sin?
 - Why did Herodias hate John even more than her husband did (vs.19-20)?

1. What do you think John was pondering while sitting chained inside a jail? (Do you think he ever regretted having criticized Herod?)

2. Why did Herod fear John even though he was only a prisoner (vs.20)?
 - Why wasn't John afraid of Herod even though he was his prisoner?
 - What in John's message stimulated Herod's interest?

1. The daughter of Herodias was in her teens. Discuss what kind of life she probably had lead up to this point?
 - What impression does the story give about the relationship between the mother and the daughter (vs.21-28)?
 - Why didn't the girl want a horse or a boat or a party dress for her birthday, as most girls her age would?

1. Why did Herodias and her daughter want to have John's head; why wasn't mere execution enough? And why on a platter, not in a bag or box?
 - How many murderers do you find in this text?
 - What effect do you think this incident had on the girl's future?

1. What does verse 26 reveal about Herod?
 - Why did the murder of John have a greater impact on Herod than his many other violent acts (vs.16)?

1. How do you think John felt in his last moments?
 - Why did the forerunner of the Messiah have to succumb to a fate like that?

1. What do you think the disciples of John thought about the fate of their teacher (vs.29)?
 - Do you think the life of John ended too early? Give your reasons.
 - Compare the life of John to the lives of Herod and Herodias.
 - What is similar about the lives and deaths of John and Jesus? What is different?

1. What do you think is the main point of this text to our time and to you personally?

9. 25000 ROLLS AND 10000 FISH (Mark.6:30-44)

BACKGROUND: The leader should show on a map where this miracle took place: near Bethsaida by the lake (Mark.6:45). The leader should also count how many kilometers it is from this place to the main towns of Galilee. Note that the main purpose of Jesus and his disciples coming here was to have a break (verses 31-32).

1. How would it usually affect a person if he is so busy that he doesn't have a chance to eat (vs.31)?
 - What do you think the disciples felt when seeing that the crowd was already waiting for them on the shore (vs.32-33)?
 - Why didn't Jesus become irritated with the people even when his day off was ruined (vs.34)?

1. When Jesus had finished his teaching it was already late in the afternoon. How do you think the disciples felt at that time of the day?
 - Count how long it would have taken to go by foot from that place to main towns of Galilee? Note that there were old people and children in the crowd.

1. Five rolls of bread and two fish made a meal for one man. How much would a lunch like that cost in our money?
 - How many villages do you think the disciples would have needed to visit in order to find 25000 rolls and 10000 fish (vs.36)?

1. How much would such a meal for 5000 people cost these days?
 - 200 denarii were at that time 2/3 of the annual income of a man. Why did the disciples mention exactly this sum (vs.37)?

1. Why did Jesus say to his disciples: "You yourselves give them something to eat" (vs.37)?
 - What should the disciples have answered to Jesus' request?

1. Where did the disciples get the courage to act according to the command of Jesus (vs.39)?
 - Do you think the people believed that they would somehow be fed when they sat down on the grass? If they did, where did they think the food would come from (vs.40)?

1. Why did Jesus increase the bread 5000 times rather than, say, change stones to breads (verses 41-42)?
 - What is the difference between a miracle that Jesus worked and the miracles that "witches" work?

1. Think of various reasons why the Christians of our time are not more interested in feeding the hungry of this world? (What are the Christians of our time occupied with?)
 - Where are the hungry that Jesus would like you to feed today?

1. Do you believe that Jesus can make 5000 fold even the (small) gifts you give to him?
 - What is the difference between faith and realism?

GLAD TIDINGS: After performing this miracle Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" ([John 6:51](#)). Through his death on the cross Jesus himself became the bread of the Holy Communion, the bread of everlasting life for us.

10. EPHPHATHA - BE OPENED (Mark.7:31-37)

BACKGROUND: The man in the text had obviously been deaf since his early childhood, because he had not learned to speak. As a result he was unable to communicate with other people. (At that time there wasn't a commonly-used sign language yet.). Isaiah had prophesied 700 years earlier (Is.35:5) that the Messiah would make the deaf hear and the mute speak (verse 37).

1. Think for a moment about the kind of sounds and voices you hear during a day. What do you think would be most difficult for you if you were unable to hear anything?
2. Imagine how this man's childhood. (What means did his parents have available to teach their child, to guard him from dangers, to make him work etc.? What kind of relationships might he have had with his peers? What do you suppose his self-image was like?)
3. Compare the everyday life of this hearing-impaired person as an adult with that of his peers?
 - Perhaps this man had also visited the synagogue and the temple a few times. How much do you think he understood about the unseen God?
1. What were the motives of the people who brought the man to Jesus? Think of various possibilities (vs.32).
 - If you helped bring the deaf man to Jesus, how would you have explained to him where you were going to take him and why?
 - Why was it extra difficult for this man to be in a crowd?
1. Why didn't Jesus heal the man in the way his friends asked him to (vs.32,34)?
 - Why didn't the man protest but instead went along with the unknown rabbi (vs.33)?
1. How much do you think the man understood of the four signs of Jesus' own sign language in verses 33-34? (What did Jesus want to convey to the man by looking up to heaven before healing him? What about by his deep sigh?)
2. Why has Mark recorded the healing word of Jesus in the original Aramaic in his gospel (vs.34)?
 - Jesus is standing in front of you just now and saying the same word as to this man: "Ephphatha! Be opened!" What does he mean by that - think about your communication with other people. (You may answer in your heart.)
1. Usually it takes three years for a child to learn the most important words of a language. How is it possible that this man gained all that information in a twinkling of an eye?
2. Every miracle of Jesus tells us something about heaven. What can we learn about it through this incident?
3. Why did the people keep talking about this miracle even though Jesus had asked them to keep silent about it (vs.36)?
 - What do you think: is it profitable for the Christian church of our day to advertise miracles in the media?

- What news would Jesus have preferred that people tell their friends?

GLAD TIDINGS: The deep communication between Jesus and his Father was broken while Jesus was hanging on the cross. This was the price Jesus had to pay for establishing the communication between us sinners and God.

11. A BLIND MAN WITHOUT A WILL OF HIS OWN (Mark.8:22-26)

BACKGROUND: This man had seen before; we know it because the gospels tell us that Jesus only healed one person who had been born blind (John 9:32). This passage tells us the one and only time when Jesus healed someone in several stages. Jesus had discussed spiritual blindness with his disciples right before this event (Mark.8:18). He had also complained once about the unbelief of Bethsaida, the place where this miracle took place (Matt.11:21).

1. Why didn't the blind man ask anything from Jesus?
 - Imagine how the life of this man had been until this day.
 - What had made this man so passive? Think of various reasons.

1. What did the friends of the blind man want Jesus to do for him (vs.22)?
 - How did Jesus answer the request of these friends?
 - Are you more like the blind man or like the friends who brought him to Jesus?

1. Why didn't Jesus want to heal the man in Bethsaida but rather outside the village?
 - Imagine that a stranger whom you cannot see took your hand. How would you react? (What does it reveal about the man that he didn't protest when Jesus was leading him by the hand out of the village?)

1. What four things did Jesus do to the blind man?
 - Why did he have to do so many things to heal this man? (What would this gradual healing and the chance to talk to Jesus during the process have meant to the blind man?)

1. Jesus led the man out of the village in order to be free from the crowd. Do you think there were still people around them there or was the man mistaken when he thought he saw them (vs.24)?
 - Imagine Jesus holding both of his hands on the head of the man and asking whether he saw anything. What would have been the right answer to his question?
 - Why didn't Jesus repeat this question at the second stage of healing (vs.25)?

1. The man's friends were probably waiting for him in the village. Why didn't Jesus want him to return there after he was healed? (What might have happened if he had returned to the village?)
 - Besides his eyes, what else was healed in the life of this man?
 - What was Jesus' ultimate goal for this man?

1. This text also asks us whether we see Jesus with the eyes of our heart (vs.18). Jesus is standing here before you and asking: "Do you see anything?" What do you answer him?
 - How has Jesus been trying to open the eyes of your heart so that you can see him?

1. What does this miracle teach us about heaven?

GLAD TIDINGS: Opening the eyes of the blind was a sign that the Lord himself had arrived and people could look straight in his face (Is.35:4-5). And yet Jesus was so hidden from their sight that most people couldn't recognize him as God. It was not easy, even for his disciples, to see Jesus as

he really is (Mark.8:18). This incident shows us that Jesus doesn't give up before we really can see him as he is (1 John 3:2).

12. TO SAVE ONE'S LIFE AND TO LOSE IT (Mark.8:34-38)

BACKGROUND: Jesus mentions here the word "cross" for the first time. His words must surely have shaken his followers, because crucifixion was at that time the greatest shame and pain that anyone could imagine. A part of its ignominy was that the condemned person had to carry his own cross to the place of execution while the passers-by were mocking him. (Note that the words "life" and "soul" are the same word in original Greek.)

1. Verses 34-38

- What kind of life is considered worth living in our time? (In other words, what does it mean to save one's life and to lose it in the vocabulary of our contemporaries?)
- To whom did Jesus address these words?
- What might the people have been thinking about following Jesus before hearing these words? What about afterwards?
- What kind of person do you think is willing to follow Jesus in these conditions?
- If Jesus wanted to gain more followers, why did he give a speech like this?

1. Verse 34 - to deny oneself

- What did it mean in the life of the disciples to deny themselves?
- What does it mean in your situation today to deny yourself in order to follow Jesus?
- (Ask only in a Buddhist context: What is the difference between Christianity and Buddhism when it comes to the concept like "denying oneself".)

1. Verse 34 - taking up one's cross

- What do you think: does Jesus mean with "the cross" any kind of suffering or only suffering that comes as a consequence of Christian faith?
- How would your life be without a cross?
- Why doesn't Jesus allow any of his followers to go through life without a cross?
- What difference does it make if the sufferer takes his cross from Jesus' hand, not Satan's, nor from other people, nor from blind fate?

1. Verse 35 - to save one's life or to lose it

- In what various ways do people try to rid themselves of their crosses?
- Why is the person whose main goal is happiness, unable to become happy?
- Where does the follower of Jesus find strength for carrying his cross?

1. Verses 36-37 - losing one's soul, saving one's soul

- For what kind of things would a person lose his life for?
- What did Jesus pay in exchange for the souls of mankind?

1. Verse 38 - being ashamed of Jesus and his words

- What truths of the Bible do you find most difficult to say aloud while your non-Christian friends are listening?
- Why is Jesus himself ashamed of the Christian who didn't have the courage to fight for the Word of God in this adulterous and sinful generation?
- What happens to a person Jesus is ashamed of?

1. Glad tidings' questions:

- What does it mean to a cross-bearing Christian that Jesus has walked the same road before him, carrying his own cross?
- Jesus had to lose his life/soul soon after these events. Why?

13. A HALF-HEARTED BELIEVER (Mark.9:14-29)

BACKGROUND: A person with an evil spirit is often called possessed. This is something different from having a mental disease, epilepsy etc. An evil spirit can never take possession of a person who believes in Jesus and is baptized, because the Holy Spirit is already dwelling in his heart. According to Luke, the boy in this text was the only child of his parents (Luke 9:38).

1. Imagine what the everyday life of this father was like since his son became possessed by an evil spirit (vs.17-18, 20-22). (Consider the relationship between the parents, with neighbors, with God; thoughts about future; attempts to heal the boy, etc.)
 - Compare the life of the boy with that of his peers.

1. What was perhaps the most difficult thing for the father in the situation described in verses 14-18? What about the son?

2. Whom did Jesus refer to when speaking of the unbelieving generation that he found so hard to put up with (vs.19)?
 - Why was it so hard for Jesus to stand the unbelief of the people in this situation particularly?

1. Why does the father include himself also in his cry for help: "Take pity on us and help us?"

2. In verse 23 Jesus seems to demand unwavering faith from the father. Why did he do that?
 - How would you feel if someone demanded a perfect faith from you when you already were distressed?

1. What did this father believe and what did he doubt while crying out the words in verse 24?
 - What did you believe and what do you doubt when you cried for help from Jesus for the problems of your loved ones?

1. Did this cry for help prove that the father already had a saving faith or not? Give your reasons.
 - When do you think the father became a believer in Jesus? Discuss various possibilities.

1. Why did Jesus help this family, although neither the father nor the son had an unwavering faith?
 - By whose faith did this miracle happen?
 - How much faith is needed in order that Jesus can help your loved ones in their sufferings?

1. It is probable that the father thought his son had died when he was lying lifeless on the ground (vs.26). Why did he have to experience that excruciating moment before Jesus helped him? (What would the father have failed to learn if he had been helped by Jesus immediately?)
 - Why does Jesus often allow us to end up in a desperate situation before he interferes? (If he had helped you immediately, what would you have failed to learn?)

1. "Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet." Put in this sentence the name of the person you are worried about. What does verse 27 say to you when you read it like that?

GLAD TIDINGS: Even when evil people and evil spirits tortured Jesus, he still believed in the power and love of his Heavenly Father with an unwavering faith. Because of his perfect faith, we also can receive help from God for ourselves and our loved ones, in spite of our doubt.

14. THE FATE OF A SEDUCER (Mark.9:42-50)

BACKGROUND: The Greek word skandalaijo in verse 42 can mean "to offend", "to tempt", "to make someone fall", "to cause to sin". The words of Jesus in this text are extremely relevant today. The news tells us often about pedophiles and producers of child porno who destroy the lives of countless children in our time. Jesus, however, speaks here not only of such extreme cases but also the secret temptations in the lives of ordinary people, such as you and me.

1. No country in the world has a legal code demanding the punishment that Jesus speaks of in verse 42. In which respect is the punishment Jesus demands stricter than the ordinary ways of execution? (Why is it that according to Jesus someone who seduces a child is not worthy even of a decent funeral?)
2. Mention some examples of how hands can cause someone to sin (vs.43)?
 - How can feet cause someone to sin (vs.45)? What about eyes (vs.47)?
 - Do you recognize a temptation at once when you encounter it?
1. Which do you fear more: that you might lose your hands, feet or eyes by an accident, or that you might end up in hell after you die?
 - Which of these possibilities do you fear more in the lives of your children/loved ones?
1. What would the listeners say if someone started to preach in our churches like Jesus does here?
2. What did Jesus mean by giving such terrible advice (verses 43-47)?
 - What would you think about Jesus' advice if one of your loved ones had been molested by a corrupt person?
1. What advice would you give a person who is struggling with sexual sins he/she hasn't been able to overcome?
2. What would happen if the Christian church stopped preaching about temptations, gross sins and hell in the way Jesus did? (How would our concept of God change? How would people's behavior change? What would be the effect on their relationship to the cross of Jesus?)
3. What is the greatest mistake of the producers and consumers of pornography in our day?
 - How should we fight against pornography privately and publicly?
1. What should we do if we realize that we haven't been able to follow these commandments of Jesus?

GLAD TIDINGS: Maybe you can see now why the hands and feet of Jesus had to be pierced with nails and why he had to die with an utter darkness inside as well as on the outside.

15. JESUS AND THE CHILDREN (Mark.10:13-16)

BACKGROUND: At the time of Jesus, boys were made members of God's nation when just eight days old. Yet children's general position in society was rather low. The Greek word pais that is used for "child" in this passage can mean a child of any age, including babies.

1. When you look at your children or other children you know, is it easy or difficult to you to believe that the kingdom of God belongs to their like? Why or why not? Give your reasons.
2. Think of various reasons why these mothers wanted to bring their children to Jesus even small babies who were not able to understand what Jesus said.
 - If you yourself were to bring your child to Jesus, why would that be?
 - Why didn't most of the mothers at that time, even as today, bring their children to Jesus?
1. Why didn't the disciples rejoice when children were brought to Jesus?
 - This is the only time when the gospels speak of Jesus as being "indignant". What in this situation made him feel like that?
1. In our day, bringing our children to Jesus means bringing them into contact with the Bible. Why is it that even Christian parents often do not ensure that their children hear the Bible at home and in Sunday school, church camps, etc?
 - Think of concrete ways that you could take your child, grandchild, or other children around you to hear the words of Jesus?
1. Why does a child enter into the kingdom of God more easily than an adult does?
2. How does a child receive a present differently than an adult does?
 - How does a child accept the greatest present: the friendship of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins? What about an adult person?
1. Imagine a kingdom that belongs to children only. How does it differ from the kingdoms of this world? (The care received, the duties to be done, etc.)
 - What does our text teach us about the kingdom of God?
1. Jesus said in another occasion: "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matt.5:20). Here he promises that even the children can enter there. How can you explain this contradiction?
2. The children that Jesus blessed that morning became adults in a couple of decades. Probably some of them became good, some of them not-so-good people. Some became happy, some others not so happy. Do you think the blessing they had received from Jesus had any lasting meaning for them? If so, what did it consist of?
 - What did the blessing of Jesus mean to these mothers later in life, when their children had to confront life's many difficulties?

GLAD TIDINGS: Perhaps the mothers of these children thought, "Jesus will never forget my child

whom he once blessed." You can trust him in the same way when it comes to your own children.

16. THE TREASURE ON THE EARTH (Mark.10:17-27)

BACKGROUND: According to Matthew this man was young (Matt.19:22) and according to Luke he had a high position in society (Luke 18:18). This young politician had really succeeded in his life. Note that respectable men neither ran nor knelt in front of someone in Israel of that day.

1. What do you think made this successful politician behave in such an unusual way as is described in verse 17?
 - The man didn't believe Jesus was God. Why did he then expect him to know the answer to his question (verses 17b-18)?
1. Why didn't this man have assurance about the eternal life even though he had followed God's commandments for all his life?
 - Why is it that we too don't always know what will happen to us after we die?
1. Many politicians have great temptations in the areas of money and women. What do you think was the reason this man had sailed clear of these temptations (vs.19-20)?
 - Note that according to Jesus, God's commandments must be followed only in deeds but also in thoughts and words. Do you think that this man had done that?
 - Could you honestly say to Jesus that you have kept these commandments?
1. The man was still lacking one thing in his relation with God. What could it be (vs.21)?
2. What kinds of things do people usually regard as their treasures (vs.21)?
 - This young man had two treasures on earth. What were they?
 - How can we collect treasures in heaven?
 - Compare a treasure on earth with the one in heaven. What are the differences?
1. This young man probably had a family and old parents to take care of. What would have happened to them if he had followed the commandment of Jesus in verse 21?
 - If you were in this young man's situation, do you think you could believe that God would somehow take care of your wife, children and parents?
 - What would you do if Jesus let you become his disciple only on the condition of giving up all your property and savings?
1. What would have happened if Jesus had welcomed this man to be his disciple without any condition?
 - According to verse 21 Jesus looked at this young man and loved him. Why then did he say to him such strict words that he left him?
1. What alternatives did this man have when he realized that he could not give up his treasure?
 - How do you think Jesus would have reacted if the man confessed to him that he loves money more than God and asked forgiveness for it?
1. Compare the reply Jesus gave to the rich young man and the one he gave to Peter (vs.27). Why are they completely different?
 - Discuss the question: Is it possible for God to save even a person who is bound to

his treasure on earth?

GLAD TIDINGS: Jesus gave up his heavenly treasure while coming to this earth. On the cross he was punished as if he had been tied up with earthly treasures and idols. Do you know why?

17. WHO WILL BECOME PRIME MINISTER? (Mark.10:32-45)

BACKGROUND: James and John were sons of Zebedee, a wealthy fisherman from Galilee. They belonged to the inner circle of the disciples together with Peter. Jesus once called James and John "sons of thunder". Now Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem in order to suffer and die there. He had already twice predicted his coming death before this event.

1. For what purpose did James and John think Jesus was going to Jerusalem?
 - Why didn't these brothers take seriously Jesus' prophecy in verses 33-34?

1. James and John already believed in Jesus, but they didn't believe that he should suffer and die. When a person does not see the necessity of Jesus' dying, what does he expect from him and Christian faith?

2. What do you think the sons of Zebedee wanted to do after having gained cabinet posts in the kingdom of Jesus?
 - Why is the thirst for power so common in our world?
 - How have you exerted influence or power over people in your family or in the work place?

1. "Cup" often refers to suffering in the language of the Bible. What would the brothers have answered if Jesus had offered them a place on the right and left side of his cross (vs.38-39)?
 - Are you willing to accept suffering as a part of the responsibility and power you have been entrusted with?

1. What was the sin of James and John a) in relation to Jesus and b) in relation to their neighbors?

2. Why did the 10 disciples get angry with the sons of Zebedee in this situation (vs.41)?
 - What does our text teach us about the quarrels between Christians and the reasons why they occur?

1. What is so revolutionary about the ideal Jesus sets here for a leader (vs.42-44)?
 - How much do you think Jesus' ideal for leadership is practiced among the Christians of our day?
 - To what degree have you followed the teaching of Jesus in verses 43-44? (You can answer in your heart.)

1. What is the biggest difference between Jesus and the brothers James and John?

2. How and when did Jesus do the job of a servant or a slave (vs.45)? (The answer comes from outside this text.)
 - The word "ransom" meant that a slave was bought and set free. Read verse 45 once more and apply it into your own life: From what did Jesus buy you free and at what price?

GLAD TIDINGS: Jesus yearns for you to accept his service to you. He wants you to receive the

forgiveness of sins including the sin of misuse of the power entrusted to you.

18. THE CRY OF A BLIND BEGGAR (Mark.10:46-52)

BACKGROUND: As far as we know, Jesus visited Jericho just once! It happened during his last journey to Jerusalem. Jesus was a direct descendant of David. God had promised this king that his son would sit on the throne of Israel forever (2 Sam.7:12-16). The Romans, who were occupying the country at this time, didn't tolerate anyone's referring to past kings, not to mention the present.

1. If you had to earn your living by begging, what do you think would be the hardest part for you?
2. What can one learn while sitting by a roadside year after year?
 - How do you think Bartimaeus felt hearing about Jesus' visits to practically every place in Israel except Jericho during his three years of public ministry?
1. Why didn't Bartimaeus seek healing for example in Jerusalem (30 km away) where Jesus went several times?
 - Do you think Bartimaeus had a plan for contacting Jesus in case he came to Jericho?
 - What do you think was the IQ of this blind beggar?
1. How did Bartimaeus conclude that Jesus was the son of King David (vs.47)?
 - Why was Bartimaeus not afraid of Romans when he cried at the top of his lungs, for the Son of David?
 - How did his cry change when people tried to calm him down (verses 47-48)?
 - How did Jesus react to the title of Son of David?
1. Think of various reasons why people tried to silence Bartimaeus' cry for help.
 - Instead of rebuking this blind man for crying out, what should the surrounding people have done (vs.48)?
 - Can you remember a time when the people around you refused to hear your cries for help? Why do you think it happened?
1. How do you think Bartimaeus felt when people told him Jesus was calling him (vs.49-50)?
 - Bartimaeus had probably taken good care of his cloak, which was both his mattress and his quilt at night. Why did he suddenly throw it away (vs.50)?
1. Why did Jesus ask Bartimaeus such an obvious question (vs.51)?
 - Jesus asks you today the same question (vs.51). What will you answer him?
1. How did Jesus heal the eyes of this man (verse 52)?
 - Verse 52 can be translated in two ways: "Your faith has healed you" or "Your faith has saved you." Why did Jesus want to say these words to Bartimaeus in front of everyone?
1. Bartimaeus followed Jesus on the road, probably all the way to Jerusalem (vs.52b). Why do you think he did so?
 - The next day, everybody was shouting and calling Jesus "Son of David" while he entered Jerusalem (Mark.11:9-10). Why had they lost their fear of the Romans?

- Within just a week of gaining his sight, Bartimaeus witnessed his benefactor being nailed to the cross. What do you think Jesus' death meant to him?

19. A CURSED TREE (Mark.11:12-14 and 20-25)

BACKGROUND: According to the Bible, God's anger strikes people who don't keep his law (Deut.28:15). Some Old Testament prophets dramatized this anger in a play or a symbolic act. Jesus' cursing the tree was such an act.

Verses 12-14

1. What happens if a person curses someone?
 - If someone has ever cursed you, tell us how you took it.
1. How could Jesus possibly expect fruit in a fig tree out of season?
 - When Jesus performed this symbolic act, who or what did the tree symbolize? (What do you think of the interpretation that Jesus was cursing his own people Israel?)
1. What fruit was Jesus expecting from his own people?
 - What fruit is Jesus expecting from your life?
 - What fruit is Jesus expecting to find in your church (or in Christian churches in general)?
1. What can we learn about the time of grace (the time of God's patience) - how long does it last?
 - When do you think God will run out of patience with the churches of Europe and America?

Verses 20-21

1. What is a cursed life like?
 - What does a cursed fig tree have in common with the cross of Jesus?

Verses 22-24

1. If you ever have prayed a prayer of faith tell us whether you received what you asked for.
 - What is the difference between a prayer of faith and a usual prayer?
1. Why don't we often ask mountains to move to another place?
 - If "a mountain" has ever moved in your life, tell us how it happened.
 - What do you think about the times when Christians command "a mountain" to move, but it doesn't?

Verse 25

1. What is the hardest thing about forgiving another person?
 - What should we do if it seems we can't forgive another person?
 - What does it show about a Christian's faith if he does not want to forgive his neighbor?
1. How does cursing a fig tree relate to Jesus' discourse after it (vs.22-25)? (According to his discourse, what is the fruit Jesus is expecting from our lives?)
 - How could Jesus forgive his enemies who he knew were plotting to kill him?

Summary:

1. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree during the last week of his life, not before?
 - What is your opinion about this interpretation of Jesus' symbolic act: "After having cursed the fig tree, Jesus took its place and became cursed himself"?

GLAD TIDINGS: Paul tells us how we can make a glorious exchange with Jesus, and get blessing instead of a curse. The leader should read ([Gal.3:13-14](#)).

20. NO BODILY RESURRECTION (Mark.12:18-27)

BACKGROUND: Sadducees were the religious elite of Jesus' time. Chief priests were usually chosen from among them. Sadducees believed in God and the five books of Moses (Genesis - Deuteronomy), but they didn't believe in a bodily resurrection, the spirit world, or an everlasting life. In fact, many liberal theologians of our time very much resemble the Sadducees of Jesus' time. (Look at verse 24).

1. What did the Sadducees expect Jesus to answer to their question (vs.18-23)?
 - Why did the Sadducees find the belief in a bodily resurrection impossible and ridiculous?
 - What was the main concern for the Sadducees according to this text?

1. Imagine the following situations:
 - You are a Sadducee and your friend has just heard that he/she has an incurable cancer. How do you comfort him/her?
 - You are a Sadducee and take part in a funeral where the widow is crying uncontrollably. What do you say to her?

1. What concept of God does the person have who doesn't believe in a bodily resurrection?
 - What does the word "salvation" mean to a person who does not believe in everlasting heaven or hell?
 - What kind of Savior do you think the Sadducees were waiting for?

1. Why did the Sadducees wander away from the right doctrine and saving faith (vs.24)?
 - Why have the liberal theologians of our time made the same mistake as the Sadducees did?
 - What can stop people being deceived by the heresy of the liberal theologians who deny bodily resurrection?

1. What arguments did Jesus use in defending his faith in a resurrection (vs.26-27)?
 - The leader may read a passage about the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: **Hebr.11:16-17**. If these three patriarchs didn't believe in a resurrection, what would they be forced to conclude about their lives?
 - What would your life be like if you didn't believe in the resurrection of the body?

1. The New Testament tells about a couple of Pharisees who became believers in Jesus, but of no Sadducees. Why do you think this was so?

2. What consolation does this passage contain for those of us who are afraid of death?
 - What do these words of Jesus mean to you personally: "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (vs.27)?

GLAD TIDINGS: If God is not the God of the dead but of the living, why did God himself have to die? It is because there wasn't any other way of saving us sinners from everlasting death to everlasting life.

21. THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS (Mark.13:14-32)

BACKGROUND: In this passage, Jesus is talking simultaneously about two events: the destruction of Jerusalem (which happened about 40 years later, A.D.70), and the time immediately before his second coming (the time we are living in now).

1. Some scientists say that if the history of mankind were put in a 24-hour day, with the end of the world at midnight, then it's now 23:55. What do you think about this idea?
 - Would you like Jesus to come back to earth while you are still living? Give your reasons.

1. The "abomination that causes desolation" (vs.14) refers in the book of Daniel to Antiochus Epiphanes, who the year 168 BC raised an altar for the Greek god Zeus inside the temple of Jerusalem. Jesus is prophesying that the same thing will happen again in the end times. What do you think will be the abomination that causes desolation in the temple of God, that is, in the Christian church of the end times?
 - In 70 A.D. the Christians remembered the words of Jesus, fled the siege of Jerusalem and were saved. What could these words mean in the end times? What will Christians have to flee from (vs.14-18)?

1. Why doesn't Jesus clearly say what will be plaguing humankind at the time of the great distress (verses 19-20)?

2. According to this passage, what is the religious situation in the church before the second coming of Jesus (vs.21-23)? (In light of this text, what do you think about the worldwide revival that some Christians believe is coming in the last days?)
 - How can we know who is proclaiming the real Christ and who is not (vs.21-23)?
 - How can the prophets of the false Christ perform signs and miracles?
 - Probably the prophets of the false Christ believe themselves to be right. What causes them to err so badly?
 - Is it possible for part of the real Christians to be deceived during the great distress? Give your reasons.

1. What could cause the atmosphere and space to change in the way described in verses 24-25? Think of different reasons?

2. What will happen to the elect when Jesus comes back? What about the others (vs.26-27)?

3. What does Jesus want to say to us today with his parable of the fig tree (vs.28-29)?

4. Liberal theologians claim that Jesus was mistaken when prophesying the time of his return (vs.30). What do you think about their claim? (What would happen to the Christian faith if Jesus turned out to be a fallible human being?)
 - What do you think verse 30 really means?

1. What does the Word of God mean to the believers of the last days (vs.31)?
 1. What does the Word of God mean to you personally today?

2. Why must the date of Jesus' second coming be a secret until the end (vs.32)?

22. LOVE WILL NEVER FAIL (Mark.14:1-9)

BACKGROUND: The leader should tell briefly what the following passages teach us about Mary of Bethany: [Luke 10:38-42](#), [John 11](#) and [John 12:1-11](#). (She is not the woman of [Luke 7:36-50](#)). The parents of Martha, Mary and Lazarus were obviously dead. Perhaps they had left some money to their unmarried daughters to be used either for a dowry or for support in their old age. The last week of Jesus' life was just starting.

1. What kind of present would you give to your friend if you knew he was dying?
 - Jesus mentions here his own funeral (vs.8)? Do you think Mary, unlike the disciples, realized he was going to die soon? Give your reasons.

1. To buy a jar of perfume made of nard you had to pay as much as an average worker earned in a whole year. That is why it was only used one drop at a time. How much would the jar be worth in our currency?
 - How long does it take to save such a sum?
 - As Mary bought this costly perfume, what might she have been thinking about her dowry or pension?

1. Why did Mary pour all the contents of the jar on the head of Jesus, instead of only a few drops?
 - The words "Messiah" and "Christ" mean "the anointed one". Jewish kings were usually anointed in the beginning of their career. Why was Jesus not anointed until just before his funeral?

1. Mary had used all her savings for the jar of perfume. What part of the criticisms hurt her most (verses 4-5)?
 - How could a year's wages have benefited the poor of the town?

1. What lifted Mary's heart most in Jesus? defense of her (verses 6-9)?
 - Can you apply Jesus' words to your own life: He/she did what she could (vs.8)?
 - What could you do for Jesus from now on?

1. What does Mary's deed have in common with Jesus' deed (i.e., his death on the cross, the "gospel" in verse 9)?
 - Which do you think is a bigger "waste": that Mary poured the expensive perfume for Jesus' sake or that Jesus poured out his blood for Mary's sake?

1. What in Mary's behavior is so unique that it will be remembered forever (vs.9)?
 - What kind of memory would you like to leave behind (vs.9)?

1. How do you think Mary felt later about the money she "wasted" on Jesus that day?
 - How did Mary learn to love Jesus so much?
 - How could we learn to love Jesus as Mary did?

GLAD TIDINGS: Mary had learned to love Jesus by listening to him. That is why she also was able to serve him at the right time. Mary had first believed in the gospel, and this faith aroused a desire in her heart to offer everything for the Lord. It was because of her that Jesus carried

the scent of nard with him everywhere during his last days on the earth.

23. A FARCE CALLED THE TRIAL OF JESUS (Mark.15:1-15)

BACKGROUND: For this study, divide into groups of 2 or 3 people. Each group discusses one or two sections of the passage, and then shares its findings from the text.

1. PONTIUS PILATE

As governor of Judea in 26-36 AD, he represented the occupying forces of Roman Empire and was accountable to Emperor Tiberius himself. Pilate did not want the emperor to hear any rumors about Jewish rebellions. It was his right to pronounce a death sentence or withhold it.

Verses 1-15

- What is your impression of the character of Pilate from this text? (For example, what was his set of values?)
- What do you think about a judge who asks questions like the ones in verses 12 and 14 during a trial?
- Why didn't Pilate use the authority he had but let others make decisions for him?
- What do you think Pilate really felt about Jesus? (Why did he call Jesus "king of the Jews" twice? Verses 9 and 12.)
- Compare these two men with each other: the Roman governor and the king of the Jews. What is the difference between them?
- Who settled this legal case in the end?
- How do you think Pilate felt when handing Jesus to be flogged and crucified (vs.15)?
- How do you think Pilate tried to pacify his conscience?
- If you were in Pilate's shoes that morning, how would you have handled the case?

2. BARABBAS

A murderer and a leader of a political rebellion, his name simply means the son of a father.

Verses 6-15

- Imagine what kind of childhood, youth and manhood this man had. What had perhaps made this man a revolutionary and a murderer?
- If your circumstances had been different, do you think you yourself could have become a murderer? Why or why not?
- What kinds of thoughts do you think were going through the mind of this man on death row? (Do you think he regretted anything?)
- Do you think Barabbas went to see the death of the person who was nailed to the cross instead of him?
- In what way are we all like Barabbas in relation to Jesus?

3. CHIEF PRIESTS

There was usually only one chief priest at a time, but in this case there were two: Caiaphas, the chief priest proper in the years 18-36 AD, and his father in law Annas, who held the post earlier. He still used his influence through his son in law.

Verses 1-15

- What do you think the chief priests regarded as their great calling in life?
- Why did the chief priests envy Jesus?
- Why didn't the chief priests recognize their own motives?
- Which crime do you think was worse: the judicial murder committed by the chief priests or the murders Barabbas committed during the rebellion?
- How is it possible for a deeply religious person to become a tool in the hand of the devil?
- Do you think you resemble the chief priests in some way? If you do, in what way?

4. THE CROWD

They cried "Hosanna" to Jesus the previous Sunday. Now they were shouting: "Crucify him!" There must have been some in this crowd who had personally been helped by Jesus.

Verses 8-15

- Why did the crowd want a dangerous murderer to be set free?
- How could the people let themselves be turned against their benefactor? (Why wasn't there even one voice for Jesus and against the manipulation of justice in this situation?)
- What would you have done if you had been in the crowd that morning?
- Do you think something like this could happen in our country in our day? Give your reasons.
- What does this text teach us about the good and bad sides of democracy?

5. JESUS

He says one sentence during the whole trial (vs.2). Otherwise he is silent.

Verses 1-15

- Until this moment Jesus refused any title except "Son of Man". Why does he now admit publicly that he is the king of the Jews (vs.2)?
- Why doesn't Jesus defend himself?
- Compare Jesus with the others in this text. How is he different from them? (What makes Jesus so admirable, especially considering his situation?)
- How do you think Jesus felt about people around him?
- Who settled the case of Jesus during his trial: Pilate, God or Satan?

24. THE UNBELIEVABLE RESURRECTION (Mark.16:1-11)

BACKGROUND: According to an old tradition, Mark was the interpreter of Peter; his gospel was the life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of Peter. One of the themes in this gospel is the lack of the disciples' faith. Although Jesus had predicted his death and resurrection beforehand, the disciples didn't believe it was possible. Note that the body of Jesus had already been anointed the day he died.

1. Why did the women from Galilee insist in visiting the grave, in spite of the stone and the soldiers who (according to Matthew) were guarding the grave (verses 1-3)?
2. The women had already witnessed the mishandled body of Jesus being anointed two days earlier. Why do you think they wanted to anoint it a second time?
 - Do you think you would have liked to see and touch the body of your loved one in that state?
 - Only John had witnessed the death of Jesus; the other disciples didn't want to see the body of Jesus even once. Why not? (Do you think there is a difference between men and women in this respect? If so, what is it?)
1. If the women had believed in the resurrection according to Jesus' prediction, how do you think they would have behaved Sunday morning?
2. What did the women think when they heard the words of the angel (vs.6)?
 - Despite the angel's words, the women were so afraid that they didn't tell anyone about the resurrection (vs.8). What were they so afraid of?
1. Why did Jesus choose women as the first witnesses of his resurrection, in spite of the fact that they were not accepted as witnesses in a court of law at that time (vs.7,10)?
2. How and when was faith in Jesus' resurrection born in the hearts of these women?
3. Is there anything in your life that seems as impossible to you as a corpse rising again? (You can answer in your heart.)
 - How would you answer if Jesus rebuked you for your lack of faith as he rebuked his disciples in verse 14?
1. What is the difference between the resurrection of the body (which is taught only in Christian faith) and the immortality of the soul (which is a common belief in many religions)?
2. If there wasn't any such thing as the resurrection of the body, what could Christianity offer to mankind?
 - Suppose someone believes all the Christian teachings, but not the resurrection of the body. Why can't we call him a Christian?
1. Peter denied his Master two days earlier. What did it mean to him when Jesus sent him a special greeting (vs.7)?
 - Imagine that you had committed a grave sin. How would you feel if, soon after that, you received a message from Jesus that he wanted to see you?

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