

Instructions for Group Leaders

Included in this lesson plan are notes and resources for you. The questions listed are to be used as a help to guide and encourage your group conversation. You are free to improvise through the questions as the conversation takes you. Do your best to involve everyone in the discussion as some may dominate conversation and others may hide.

Your main role as a Home Group leader is to build community and make disciples, not to teach. Teaching will be a natural element of discussion, but allow the questions to move your members toward understanding the concept of the passage and message.

Remember to review your resources for leading a discussion. Those techniques will help you to build a involved and caring atmosphere as well as challenge you as you serve and lead your group.

Attached is an outline of the study for the trimester. Listed first is a set of passages for you to read before your first meeting. Studying these passages will help you to know the context of the passage and prepare you to respond to questions.

Your outline will show you the passage for the week and the themes to be discussed. Be sure to review the passage and questions before each meeting.

Your lesson each week is only expected to last 30-40 minutes. These study discussions should be only one element of your home group community. Make sure to also allow time for laughter, history telling (getting to know each other), prayer, service, etc.

After the outline, you'll find your weekly breakdown of passages and questions. Each lesson will list the passages to read for that meeting as well as a list of questions to ask the group. For your convenience, the questions will be marked as what type of question they are. Each type of question serves a unique purpose.

Observation Questions: Helps the group discover context, people, actions that are literally taking place in the passage. Helps the group set a foundation to discuss the themes. These questions are great for involving individuals who are typically quite or cautious about sharing.

Interpretation Questions: Helps the group discover what is meant by the writer. Understanding what the writer was saying to his audience is an invaluable element of understanding the message being given. It cannot mean something to us today that it did not mean to the audience it was written to. It can however be applied uniquely to each reader. (See Application Questions)

Application Questions: Helps the group make the passage being discussed personally relevant to current circumstances. These questions move the reader beyond knowledge to a place where they can let the Holy Spirit transform their life.

Each question is abbreviated as: Obs., Int., or App.

Facilitator Outline: Stories of Jesus (from Gospel of Mark)

6 Weeks

Note for Group Facilitator: Before beginning this session, it would be helpful to read the Gospel of Mark on your own to bring clarity and context to your lessons. Understanding the sequence of events will be helpful as the selected stories are not in immediate order. It is also helpful to pay attention to any foot-notes as you read as sometimes these bring additional understanding and in some cases useful cross-references to other writings in the Bible.

Lesson 1: Mark 1:9-11 + Mark 6:1-5 (Jesus rejected in hometown)

Facilitator's Objective:

- Discuss how people change after an encounter with God.
- Consider how our peers might respond as they begin to see change in our life.
- Encourage members to be confident in the change (transformation) that the Lord is bringing in their lives, even if they are challenged or misunderstood.

Lesson 2: Mark 8:11-13 + Matthew 2:1-6 (The Pharisees demand a sign)

Facilitator's Objective:

- Separating the attitude of expectation from the attitude of dependency in our approach to God.
- Recognizing if we have "conditional belief."
- Learning how to accept Jesus for who he is without requiring anything extra.

Lesson 3: Mark 10:17-22 + Mark 12:28-31 (How to "Love your neighbor")

Facilitator's Objective:

- Learn to follow Jesus' example about how to love your neighbor.
- Identify individuals who need to be loved by knowing the truth.

Lesson 4: Mark 14:1-9 + Exodus 23:19 (The anointing of Jesus)

Facilitator's Objective:

- Recognize the difference between offering the Lord your best and offering Him leftovers.
- Identify what it means to offer the Lord your best in a practical way (time, money, relationships)

Lesson 5: Mark 14:32-42 + Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus prays in response to temptation)

Facilitator's Objective:

- Observe Jesus' dealings with temptation
- Recognize the difference between how Jesus and the disciples responded to a serious situation.
- Discuss how to identify "our flesh" (sinful nature/human nature)

Lesson 6: Mark 14:53-65 & Exodus 3:13-15 (Jesus has *every* characteristic of the Lord)

Facilitator's Objective:

- Discuss how we might project a "filter" onto how we perceive or accept Jesus.
 - Discover the characteristics of Jesus by exploring the variety of qualities we know about it.
-

Facilitator's Notes: Lesson 1 | Mark 1:9-15 + Mark 6:1-5 (Jesus rejected in hometown)

Lesson 1 Objective:

- Discuss how people change after an encounter with God.
- Consider how our peers might respond as they begin to see change in our life.
- Encourage members to be confident in the change (transformation) that the Lord is bringing in their lives, even if they are challenged or misunderstood.

Read Mark 1:9-11

1. (Obs) What events does this passage say take place during the baptism of Jesus?
2. (Int) Why do you think these words (*verse 11*) were important for the Lord to speak at the beginning of Jesus' ministry?
3. (Int) Why do you think Jesus decides to ask John to baptize him before beginning his public ministry?

Read Mark 6:1-5

4. (Obs) What did the people say about Jesus when they listened to his preaching in the synagogue?
 5. (App) Have you seen someone else experience a significant change after an encounter with Jesus?
 6. (App) Has the Lord ever done a significant thing in your life that has changed the way you live, behave, or talk? How did your family or peers respond to you after witnessing this change?
 7. (Int) Why do you think it was so hard for the people in Nazareth to accept Jesus' teaching, while people who'd never met Jesus accepted him right away?
 8. (App) How do you feel about sharing your story of God's work in your life with your family and peers?
-

Facilitator's Notes: Lesson 2 | Mark 8:11-13 + Matthew 2:1-6 (The Pharisees demand a sign)

Lesson 2 Objective:

- Separating the attitude of expectation from the attitude of dependency in our approach to God.
- Recognizing if we have "conditional belief."
- Learning how to accept Jesus for who he is without requiring anything extra.

Read Mark 8:11-13

1. (Obs) Describe, in your own words, Jesus' first interaction with the Pharisees.
2. (Int) Why do you think the Pharisees were so aggressive about getting Jesus to perform a miracle?
3. (App) How do you feel when somebody approaches you with a demand?
4. (Int) What do you think it would say about Jesus' character if he decided to give into the demands of the Pharisees?

Read Matthew 2:1-6

5. (Obs) How did the wise men approach Jesus differently than the Pharisees?
 6. (Int) In Matthew chapter 7, Jesus says that "everyone who asks receives, everyone who seeks finds, and everyone who knocks the door will be opened." What is the difference in attitude between asking and demanding?
 7. (App) How might an attitude of expectation or entitlement damage your relationship with the Lord?
 8. (App) Can you think of an example of an expectation of the Lord, perhaps from your own life, that might be harmful?
 9. (App) What do you think is a good way to overcome harmful expectations of Jesus?
-

Facilitator's Notes: Lesson 3 | Mark 10:17-22 + Mark 12:28-31 (How to "Love your neighbor")

Lesson 3 Objective:

- Learn to follow Jesus' example about how to love your neighbor.
- Identify individuals who need to be loved by knowing the truth.

Read Mark 10:17-22

1. (Obs) What are Jesus' words to the rich young man in verse 21 after it says that he loved him?
2. (Int) If Jesus loved the young man, why do you think he asked him to do such a hard thing?
3. (App) Can you think of a person in your life, who loves you, but has made you do something hard for your own good? How do you know they love you?

Read Mark 12:28-31

4. (Obs) What comes to mind when you think of the word "love"?
 5. (Int) Consider what we've read so far, or other passages you know that display the love of Christ. How is Jesus' definition of love similar or different to the definitions you described?
 6. (App) When you think about the ways in which God has shown love to you, what kinds of things come to mind?
 7. (App) Considering the things you just shared, how does telling your friends and peers about the life of Jesus (the Gospel) demonstrate love?
 8. (Int) If you were to withhold the good news of Jesus' life from a friend or peer, how would that oppose Jesus' commandment to "love your neighbor as yourself"?
-

Facilitator's Notes: Lesson 4 | Mark 14:1-9 + Exodus 23:19 (The anointing of Jesus)

Lesson 4 Objective:

- Recognize the difference between offering the Lord your best and offering him leftovers.
- Identify what it means to offer the Lord your best in a practical way (time, money, relationships)

Read Mark 14:1-9

1. (Obs) From this passage, what do you know about the woman's jar of perfume?
2. (Int) Why do you think the others at the table considered it wasteful to anoint Jesus with the perfume?
3. (App) Think about a time when someone gave you an expensive gift. How did you feel toward that person after receiving the gift?
4. (Int) Why do you think that Jesus is pleased with the woman's gift instead of angry like the others at the table?
5. (Int) What motives do you think the woman might have had to cause her to spend such a valuable item on Jesus?

Read Exodus 23:19a

6. (Int) Why do you think the Lord instructs his people to bring him their very best of their first harvest instead of their extras or leftovers?
 7. (App) How do you feel about urgently presenting the best you have to the Lord?
 8. (App) When you think about all that *you* have, (considering our possessions, time, finances, dreams, etc) What do you think it looks like to offer your very best to Jesus?
-

Facilitator's Notes: Lesson 5 | Mark 14:32-42 + Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus prays in response to temptation)

Lesson 5 Objective:

- Observe Jesus' dealings with temptation
- Recognize the difference between how Jesus and the disciples responded to a serious situation.
- Discuss how to identify "our flesh" (sinful nature/human nature)

Read Mark 14:32-42

1. (Obs) What kind of response did Peter, James and John have after Jesus told him about his grief?
2. (Obs) How was Jesus response to temptation different from his disciples'?
3. (Int) What does Jesus mean when he says "the spirit is willing but the body (flesh) is weak"? (verse 38)
4. (App) How do you feel about *your* ability to recognize and respond to temptation?
5. (Int) In what ways do you think prayer is beneficial to resisting temptation? (You may share from personal experience)

Read Matthew 4:1-11

6. (Obs/Int) What difficult circumstances did Jesus face in this passage, and how might those circumstances have made it more challenging for Jesus to resist temptation?
 7. (App) When you think about your own life, what kinds of circumstances do you feel cause you to be most vulnerable to temptation?
 8. (App) Jesus demonstrated how to overcome temptation by praying and by leaning on God's word for support. How might prayer and scripture be beneficial to you as you encounter temptation?
-

Facilitator's Notes: Lesson 6 | Mark 14:53-65 & Exodus 3:13-15 (Jesus has *every* characteristic of the Lord)

Lesson 6 Objective:

- Discuss how we might project a "filter" onto how we perceive or accept Jesus.
- Discover the characteristics of Jesus by exploring the variety of qualities we know about it.

Read Mark 14:53-65

1. (Obs) From what you see in this passage, what is the high council (Sanhedrin) trying to accomplish at this meeting with Jesus?
2. (Int) Why do you think Jesus remained so silent during all of his accuser's false claims?
3. (App) How do you feel when you hear someone lie about who you are or what you have said?
4. (Obs) Which question did Jesus decide to respond to and how did he choose to respond to it?
5. (Int) Why do you think the high council was so angry after hearing Jesus identify himself?

Read Exodus 3:13-15

6. (Obs) What names and titles does the Lord use to identify himself to Moses?
7. (Int) Why do you think it was important for the Lord to identify himself to the nation of Israel in this passage?
8. (Int) Why do you think the high council was unwilling to accept Jesus as "I AM, the God of your ancestors"?
9. (App) When you think about Jesus, what qualities immediately come to mind? Do you typically associate the characteristics of Jesus with the characteristics of God described in Exodus?
10. (App) How might having an incomplete perception of Jesus be destructive to your relationship with God?

