

February 25, 2024

Steps—Mark, Chapter 8

Hard to Follow



Jesus is attracting a lot of followers. The problem is that most of those following him still don't understand his message—even the disciples. People are following him because of his miracles, not his message. There are some with ulterior motives—they want to destroy him.

The Need for Food

Jesus is feeding people again. He is feeding them both physically and spiritually. He knows that it is very hard for people to focus on his message with groaning bellies.

Read Mark 8:1-13.

- Why is the crowd so hungry? Do the disciples not remember the previous feeding miracle or are they just reticent to ask? Why?
- Why is it important for us to consider the physical needs of people who don't know Jesus?
- The Pharisees in Dalmanutha are testing Jesus. The word for test, *peirazo*, also means tempt. How does Jesus respond to this test?
- What does Jesus mean that no miraculous sign will be given to this generation?

Yeast

In those days everyone knew that a tiny amount of yeast could ferment a large amount of dough. If you've ever made sourdough bread from a starter you know that you just need a pinch of fermented dough from a previous batch to feed your new batch. Jesus uses this familiar concept as an analogy.

Read Mark 8:14-21.

- What does the yeast represent in Jesus' warning? What is he concerned about? How does gossip fit into this analogy?
- R.M. Solomon says that the Pharisees see the kingdom of God in terms of power and ritual, while the Herodians see it as political power and expediency. How do you see the kingdom of God?
- It is easy to forget Jesus' teachings when we are focused on earthly problems. How can we change our focus? Read Matthew 6:31-34 for help.

Second Chances

Sometimes we need a second chance, an extra push, another reminder.

Read Mark 8:22-26.

- Why did Jesus take the blind man out of the village and then after healing him ask him to not go back into the village?
- What is the significance of it taking two tries to completely heal the man? Is there a lesson here? Have you ever needed a “second touch” to see Jesus more clearly?

Turning Point

The following verses are often labeled the “turning point” of the Gospel of Mark. It is the middle of the gospel, but it is also something more. It marks a turning point for Peter, who is said to be the one who shared his story with Mark.

Read Mark 8:27-30.

- Who do people think Jesus is according to what the disciples have heard?
- Read Matthew 16:17-19 and describe how Jesus responded to Peter.
- How was this a turning point for Peter?
- What was the turning point in your faith journey?

Hard to Follow

Jesus is finally sharing what to expect next to his disciples. Jesus is predicting suffering, rejection, death, and resurrection. The disciples are disturbed by this message—especially Peter. The word rebuke comes from the Greek word, *epitimao*. The roots of this word mean to superimpose one's honor or value upon another. Peter wants to impose his will upon Jesus because he values Jesus' life as most important. But Jesus turns on him and sets him straight about what is honorable and valuable.

Read Mark 8:31-38.

- Why would Jesus' revelation about his future disturb the disciples?
- Why would Peter, who knew Jesus was Messiah, turn around and feel he must rebuke Jesus?
- How do we sometimes try to force our will upon God rather than accepting His will?
- What are some ways that believers today try to force their values, their viewpoints, their distortions of the truth upon others? How can we avoid doing that?
- What are the three steps Jesus says we must take in Mark 8:34?

Take Action

What step from verse 34 is the most difficult for you in following Jesus?

Pray and ask God for an opportunity to take that step this week.