

Why study Mark 9-16?

*For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Mark 10 v 45

Expectations can be a problem—if they're wrong! Have you ever arranged to meet someone for the first time, only to miss them because you expected someone who looked quite different? Later perhaps, you had a good laugh about it... but how devastating to miss God Himself, just because you expected *Him* to look different...

In first-century Israel, people had completely wrong expectations about the Messiah—God's promised King, sent to rescue Israel. When they saw Jesus they refused to believe in Him. How could God's King come to serve and suffer? How could Israel's Messiah judge Israel's leaders and their precious temple? How could the promised Rescuer not rescue Himself from the cross? Because of their wrong expectations they rejected Him.

But in Mark's Gospel chapters 1–8, the very ordinary disciples of Jesus had already come to see, with the 'eyes of faith', that this carpenter turned travelling teacher was, in fact, God's King, Judge and Son. Chapters 9–16 go on to show us what it means to follow this very different Servant King. It means denying yourself, taking up your cross, losing your own life, and trusting instead in Jesus' promise of eternal life in the age to come. It means praying daily: 'I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!'

Do Christians today make the same mistake as those in Jesus' day? Perhaps you are a new believer looking forward to a new life of following Jesus and expecting everything to be wonderful. Perhaps you have been a Christian for years, and you wonder why the Christian life is such a struggle. Surely, if God was truly with His people, things wouldn't be like this! Or perhaps you are still investigating things, and want to discover what authentic Christianity really is.

Too often our ideas of 'blessing' or 'success' are shaped by the false values of the world, not God—by what we see, rather than by faith. The second half of Mark is packed with challenges and encouragement to help us live by faith, not by sight, and this *Good Book Guide* will help us learn what it really means to follow our Servant King.



Mark 8 v 31 – 9 v 50

THE EXAMPLE OF THE KING

talkabout

1. Think about the way in which most people picture 'success'. As a group, come up with a popular description of a 'successful' person. By contrast, how do you think Christians would describe a successful person?

The first half of Mark's Gospel asks the question: 'Who is this?' (4 v 41). It comes to a climax when Peter answers the question by confessing that Jesus is the Christ—God's promised Saviour King (8 v 29). Jesus warns the disciples not to tell people this (8 v 30). The reason is that the disciples do not yet understand what it means for Jesus to be the Christ. They are expecting the promised Christ to come in triumph and glory.

investigate

 Read Mark 8 v 31-38

2. Explain from these verses what it means for Jesus to be God's promised Saviour King.

3. Why do you think Peter rebukes Jesus?



4. Why does Jesus call Peter 'Satan'?

5. What does Jesus say following Him will involve?

6. What wonderful promise is given to those who follow Jesus?

➔ **apply**

7. In what ways are we tempted to be ashamed of Jesus and His words (8 v 38)? Give specific examples.

- How do you think Jesus would define 'success'? Compare your answers with those discussed in Question 1.

 **getting personal**

What kind of success are you aiming for? In which areas of life do you need to repent of seeking the wrong kind of success, and follow Jesus' words instead?

↓ investigate

Chapters 9-10 describe the journey of Jesus, and His disciples, to Jerusalem. This is the way to the cross. In these chapters Jesus explains what it means to be His disciple. This teaching is built around three predictions of His death (8 v 31; 9 v 31; 10 v 32-34). We learn that to follow Jesus is to accept the way of the cross—a life of service and sacrifice.

▶ Read Mark 9 v 2-13

8. We might expect the voice from heaven to say: 'Look how amazing and glorious He is'. What does it say instead? Why?

▶ Read Mark 9 v 14-29

9. This section raises the question: 'How can Jesus' followers cope when He is gone?' What is the problem affecting Jesus' disciples and what answer is given in these verses?

10. Look at 9 v 29. What is the 'prayer' that is offered to Jesus in this story? How does this help us understand 9 v 29?

▶ Read Mark 9 v 30-50

11. In verses 30-32 Jesus again predicts His death. What practical lessons for His followers does Jesus draw out from the pattern of service and sacrifice that will be shown in His crucifixion (see verses 33-50)?



➔ **apply**

12. What can we learn about ourselves from the disciples' failures?

- And what can we do practically to ensure that we 'listen to Him'?

getting personal

Do you see in yourself the same weaknesses as the disciples—failing to listen to Jesus' words or trust Him to do what you cannot? Or have you become complacent about following Him, confident in your own abilities instead? What changes do you need to pray about and plan for?

↑ **pray**

Think about God...

- Think of all the reasons why you can give praise and thanks to God that Jesus came as a Servant, not as a conqueror

Think about yourself...

- In which areas of your life is the prayer of 9 v 24 relevant for you?

Think about others...

- Who do you know who is struggling with unbelief, or has failed to truly understand the words of Jesus? What about those who do understand, but are ashamed of Jesus' words? How can you pray for them?