

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP STUDY IN MARK'S GOSPEL – CHAPTER TEN

Denying ourselves, taking up the cross and following Him leads to transformation, Jesus miraculously changing us from the inside out. This in turn enables us to move into the hell on earth, which is life for many, and be God's means of making changes. It results in a new attitude to leadership and competition, where our desire now is to serve not to win. This was the exciting new prospect Jesus began to demonstrate to His friends.(9:1)

Only six days later three of them had a mountain top experience they would never forget.(II Pet.1:16-18) Peter, James and John saw Jesus transfigured by a brilliant light which shone from within. The word 'transfigured' here is the same as the word 'transformed' in Romans 12:2 and II Cor.3:18, and means 'changed from within'. The presence of God within Him became apparent in a physical sense as it had always been obvious in His character, words and work. He was the light of the world and is the light within us.(Jn.9:5; Mt.5:14-16) Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus. The disciples would have been reminded of events in their lives which foreshadowed this day.(Exod.33:29; I Kgs.18:36-38) Each also left this world in a way which foreshadowed Jesus.(Dt.34:6; II Kgs.2:11) In the same way when we are transformed by letting the Lord live in us, the Bible characters come alive to us and so to those we teach.(9:2-4)

Peter was always the one to speak first, right or wrong. He was the kind of person who when he did not know what to say made the mistake of saying what came first into his head. We are not told what his purpose was in proposing to build three huts; presumably he wanted to keep the experience going as long as possible. We too make the mistake of trying to keep something good going without understanding its true meaning. He must have had the shock of his life when God answered him from heaven, witnessing to who Jesus was and urging him to listen carefully. God spoke from a cloud as He had done before.(Exod.19:9; 33:9) Transformation should make us good listeners also, first to God and then to others. Next moment it was all over – or was it?(9:5-8)

Four times now,(Mark 5:43; 7:36; 8:30; 9:9) Jesus had told people to keep quiet about Him because they did not yet understand His message and purpose, so opening their mouths would only cause confusion. Most importantly, they had not yet grasped what He meant by the resurrection which in turn would make transformation meaningful. They assumed it had something to do with Malachi's promise that Elijah would come before the Messiah.(Mal.4:5) Jesus explained that Malachi's prophecy had already happened in the coming of John the Baptist. The experts of those days, the scribes, had rejected him, and their king had killed him.(Mk.6:17-29) Now what had been promised concerning the Messiah,(Ps.22; Ps.69; Isa.53) would be fulfilled also.(9:9-13)

From a glimpse of heaven on top of the mountain the group returned to a taste of hell at the bottom of the mountain. A family had suffered years of heart-break because of a demon possessed and epileptic boy whose fits threw him into fire or water, so he was probably scarred and brain-damaged. They had sought help from Jesus' disciples who are likely to have tried to copy what they had seen Jesus do in such situations before. Jesus began as He so often did with questions, giving people the opportunity to share their hearts with Him and to reflect on what might have gone wrong. His rebuke about their unbelief was not because they could not make the miracle happen but because they imitated Him rather than trusting Him to do whatever He planned this time. Wonderfully the father recognised that what was being asked of him was not big faith, but faith in Jesus however small. Jesus commanded the evil spirit to leave and never return recognising the danger of a 'vacant house'.(Mt.12:43-45) Satan did not give up easily, reminding us of his terrible power, but at the same time there is no question Who is greater.(I Jn.4:4) The disciples were confused as to where they had failed. They had not yet understood that transformation is Christ's work not our best copy of Him.(9:14-29)

He had another try at giving them the secret of transformation, His death and resurrection, but still they did not catch on. Like us they were too nervous of Jesus to ask Him to explain.(9:30-32)

On the way home there was a heated discussion going on among the disciples which they did not want Jesus to hear. It was an issue which flared up from time to time,(10:35-45) the question of status among them. Three of them had been chosen to go up the mountain. Was it because they were special? Jesus, as always, knew exactly what was going on, and answered their question. Being a leader is about being prepared to be last as a servant. This is transformation. Such leadership regards a child as of as much importance to God as an important public figure. Leaders in a worldly sense want recognition among other leaders, so to them children do not count.(9:33-37)

Secular leadership is wary of competition and seeks to sabotage it. The disciples disapproved of someone using the name of Jesus who did not belong to their group and must therefore in their minds be wrong. Jesus pointed out that there are only two groups in the world, those who are for Him and those who are against, regardless of what church they belong to or what label they carry. Transformed leaders recognise God at work through all others.(9:38-41)

Those who suffer most from ambitious, competitive leaders are the children for whom God will hold us responsible. What we do with our hands, see with our eyes or where we go with our feet, harms children first. The word 'stumble' in the New Testament comes from the picture of the stick that held a gin-trap open. Transformation begins when we are willing to cut out the bullying and abuse, and to serve them instead. Three times in verses 44, 46 and 48 Jesus repeats the warning from Isa.66:24 of the fate of the leaders who ignore His command to serve.(9:42-48)

Jesus completed His warning by comparing the transformed Christian to salt which can put out the fire of arrogant leadership. We are the salt of the earth,(Matt.5:13) who are to be His means of bringing peace to the divisions within the church. If we let Him transform ambition into service we have nothing to fear from persecution or hell.(9:49-50)

Before moving on to chapter 10 review your titles for the previous chapter. Consider your overall theme and how it fits into what you have discovered so far. Now let us divide and title chapter 10. My suggestions are verses 1-12; 13-16; 17-22; 23-31; 32-34; 35-45; 46-52. You are welcome to choose other divisions if you prefer them.

**10:1-12** Q.1 Jesus wanted to teach people, the religious experts wanted to side-track.. What was the issue this time? What did the Old Testament teach on this question?(Deut.24:1-4) Why do you suppose some wanted to make this a subject for argument? How is it still a cause of dispute and division? What different point of view did Jesus take? Where did He put the emphasis in matters of this kind? What scriptures did He draw on?(Gen.1:27; 2:24) How does what He taught make a difference in practice to a couple who are struggling in their marriage. Who is the 'no man' of verse 9? Again what is the effect of Jesus' words on real life marriages?

Q.2 What did Jesus say here about re-marriage? Was He contradicting the teaching of Deut.24? If not, how can these two scriptures be reconciled? In the light of verse 5, what was Jesus' purpose in making these statements? Had He made a new law for Christians? On what present day marriage situations had He not commented?

**10:13-16** Q.3 Why do you suppose the disciples objected to children being brought to Jesus for Him to touch them? How are children 'touched' by Jesus? Why do you think Mark inserted this story right after the one on divorce? How did Jesus turn this situation into a teaching opportunity? What important principle had the disciples overlooked of which He now reminded them? How can we help children to come to Jesus and to be blessed by Him?

**10:17-22** Q.4 What do you know about the man who came to Jesus this time? What had drawn Him to Jesus? Why did he call the Lord 'good'? For what was he searching? What had he done before to try to satisfy his inner emptiness? Why did Jesus seem to question the man's description of Him as good? Who alone is good? What therefore was the secret of Jesus' goodness? How does this illustrate the idea of transformation from the previous chapter? And so how did it answer the man's question about eternal life?

Q.5 To which of the commandments did Jesus refer? Which ones did He leave out? Would those commandments have been a problem to this man? How therefore had Jesus gently led him into a trap? How did Jesus feel about him? How did He test his sincerity? Did the fact that the man went away grieving mean that the whole conversation had been a waste of time? Is becoming a Christian about giving things up?

**10:23-31** Q.6 Who did Jesus say will find it hard to enter the kingdom of heaven? "The eye of a needle" was apparently a small gate into Jerusalem which a laden camel could only enter by first having his load removed and then going down on his knees. How does this illustrate what is needed of a rich man who wants eternal life? What does this story teach us about whose work salvation is, whether for rich or poor? What will be the reward, even now on earth, of following Him? What does verse 30 mean in practical terms today? Have we therefore lost or gained by taking up the cross and following Him? In what sense is the Christian life now a foretaste of eternal life?

**10:32-34** Q.7 What secret did Jesus now let them in on? Why did He keep saying the same things about what was to happen to Him? How was the disciples' reaction different from the last occasion?(Mark 8:31) What does this suggest had happened to Peter since last time? Why did the Lord keep reminding us of the same principle?( I Cor.2:2)

**10:35-45** Q.8 How did James and John now provide Jesus with a real life situation which allowed Him to emphasise the same lesson again. In what way was this a continuation of a conversation which had been going on earlier?(9:33) What does this suggest they had learned from His answer last time? What answer did Jesus give them this time? What was the cup He had to drink? (Isa.51:17; Jer.49:12; Matt.26:39) What was the baptism with which He had to be baptised? (Lk.12:50; Rom.6:3-11) So what did He mean? Why couldn't the disciples do these things?

Q.9 What is real leadership according to Jesus? How does it differ from our normal view of leadership? What would this kind of leadership look like if it was practised in the church? Why are we unwilling or afraid to lead like this? What would happen in business or politics if people led as Jesus described? What was Jesus' own example of leadership? Which kind did He practise? Did it work then? Does it work now if He lives in us?

**10:46-52** Q.10 What have we already seen is pictured by blindness and by sight being restored in the New Testament? How do people even today try to discourage those wanting to see Jesus for themselves? What did Jesus tell the man to do? What question did He ask him? Why was it a strange question? What was the expression of faith in Bartimaeus? How can the spiritually blind do the same today? What did he do as soon as he could see Jesus? Again what does this teach us about the purpose of spiritual sight?