

Coming into Focus: The Miracle that Didn't Take

Mark 8:22-38

Small Group Discussion Guide

OPENING INTERACTION (get everyone involved in discussion):

- Have you ever met a celebrity in person, who you'd previously only seen on a screen? What were you able to see about them in-person that was different from their on-screen persona?
- What was the first aspect of Jesus that you "saw," that most drew you to him or initially kept you away from him? Looking back, was that an accurate perception?

TRANSITION: This week we're thinking about how we see Jesus, because out of that flows the trajectory of our lives.

READ Mark 8:22-26

- What is different from Jesus' other miracles? What details initially stand out to you?
- How might Jesus involving the blind man in an uncomfortable process of healing build the man's faith? Discuss.
- How might Jesus' healing process in this passage have developed the disciples' faith in him?
- What do we see at the end of v. 23 that shows us (in view of v. 17) that Jesus is doing something for the disciples in this miracle? Discuss that connection.
- Might Jesus have ever asked you to do something uncomfortable when you asked for healing or take you through a longer process of healing than you wanted? How did you respond? What might Jesus have been teaching you?

READ Mark 8:27-30

- Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" Why is this indirect question a great approach? If you were asked today, "Who do people (in your world) say that Jesus is?" What are some answers you would give?
- What understanding do people have of Jesus, based on the disciples' answer to this first question? Why are all of these answers insufficient?
- Jesus then asks, "Who do you say I am?" What is Peter's response?
- What does "Messiah" mean?
- Why is this declaration (v. 29) such a "watershed" moment in Mark's Gospel?
- Christians believe that "Jesus is not just a good moral example, not just one of many options on the religious buffet, but the Divine King of Kings who came to do for you what you could never do for yourself." **Do you see Jesus this way? If not, how do you see him right now in your journey of understanding who he is?** *(Small groups should be a safe place to share where we're truly at in our faith journey.)*

Read Mark 8:31-33

- The disciples now understand that Jesus is the Messianic, Divine King. How does Jesus go on to describe his kingship in this passage?
- James Edwards explains what a shock this would have been to hear for the first time: "When Jesus finally speaks of his messianic status it is not to claim the common understanding [of Messiah] but to redefine it practically beyond recognition.... Not only does Jesus not fit the messianic stereotype, but he defines his mission in scandalous contrast to it." Discuss this quote: why is Jesus' description a "scandalous contrast" to the disciples' understanding?
- If Jesus goes to Jerusalem for a cross, not a throne, and follows a road straight to suffering and death, what will that mean for the Disciples?
- What does Peter's reply show about his limited understanding of Jesus?
- Why do you think Jesus responded so harshly to Peter? What was at stake?

Read Mark 8:34-38

- Pastor Josh states that this passage shows, "A right view of Jesus leads to a right view of us." Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not? How could a wrong view of Jesus produce a wrong understanding of being his disciple?
- What did Jesus mean, that they must "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me?" Discuss the implications of this statement, especially with regard to our agenda and our identity.
 - What about this statement is most challenging for you?
 - What does it mean that we get a new identity? Where do you see this in the passage?
 - Where might you need a more accurate view of Jesus or the Father (his goodness and love, his sovereignty, his holiness, his lordship over us, his way of relationship via grace and faith, the reality of suffering and sacrifice in the Christian walk, etc.?)
 - Is there something in life, about which you say, 'If Jesus asked me to give up _____,' that would be the line I couldn't cross?
 - You won't give up your main treasure unless you believe that Jesus/God loves you more than you love yourself and has more power to meet your deepest needs than you do. What is your current relationship to this concept, and your ability to live it out? Discuss.

APPLICATION:

1. How might we put Jesus' agenda above our own? What stands in the way of your doing this?
2. How can we stop defining our worth by our accomplishments, relationships, money, etc., and let Jesus define us – that we do things for him because we are loved not to earn his love?

PRAYER: Share with one another some of your current needs, and pray for one another. Feel free to share and pray for any issues regarding your need for a better view of who Jesus is.