

# Discover Mark

## Introduction

Each of us are running a race called life, but who is making us run or why are we running after all? We all are busy running this race, but where are we heading? Some of us may have a target but what about life beyond that? Many of our world's greatest achievers suffer from a sense of meaninglessness after having given their all to achieve their targets, only to realise that life is much more than a target.

## What is life?

Have you ever wondered about it? Perhaps you have! Many a great minds have described life as a beautiful journey and like all journeys it has a beginning as well as an end.

We don't have much of a say about the beginning, in fact each of our life-journey has already begun. The mystery about what lay ahead is worth exploring, if it couldn't be so then why run?

"Discover" is a workbook that takes you through the life of Jesus Christ, the most influential man of all human history according to the Time magazine. The attempt is to follow his journey and uncover his secrets of life and beyond. There are 10 studies that will help you delve deeper into Jesus' life.

## But why should we study about Jesus?

The existential questions with which we began, Jesus claims to have answers for each of them. In fact he describes himself as the answer. We are all aware of the kind of influence he has had on this world of ours, therefore it's worth studying this top influencer's life.

"Discover" can be used by individuals as well as groups. Feel free to invite your friends to join you on this journey. In a group study, take around 20 minutes to go through the exercise explained above and then spend another 20 minutes or so sharing the lessons learnt.

Happy discovering...

# Getting started...

Each of these studies start with a thought – “Jump Start”, followed by the text to discover – “The Case Text”. To help you dig deeper into the text, you will find some tools to help you dig up the secrets. Start with the “Scanner On” to see what’s in the text, the characters, their actions and their sayings. Follow it up with the “Drill Through”, these are probing questions to help you look beyond the text and discover the message of the text. “Action Stations” helps you to internalise the message or in other words it helps you to put it into your life’s perspective and practice.

The ten studies in this workbook are from the Gospel of Mark. Mark wrote the first of the four biographies of Jesus, these are commonly known as the gospels. The word gospel means ‘good news’. According to Mark’s biographical record, Jesus’ identity and actions hide the secret to a Life in its fullness and this is the good news.

## **Who is this Mark?**

According to scholars Mark was probably the cousin of Barnabas (Acts 4. 36-37) and he was a friend of the apostles Peter, from whom he gathered much of his information about Jesus, and Paul, whom he accompanied on some of his missionary journeys.

## **When was it written and for whom?**

About 60-65 AD. It was written for all people.

## **Key Themes**

- 1) The Humanity of Jesus: Mark, perhaps more than the other Gospel writers, emphasizes the humanity of Jesus. We see Jesus at times weary (8.12) and angry (3.5). Jesus is no imaginary person but someone who lived on Planet Earth.
- 2) The Son of Man: This term, used frequently by Jesus of Himself, has two meanings, both found in the Old Testament. First, it denotes a human and someone quite different from God. Secondly, it referred back to a figure in Daniel 7. 13-14: One who was given 'dominion, glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations and languages should serve him' In the Jewish mind, the second use always referred to the Messiah.
- 3) The Christ (the Greek equivalent for Messiah which is Hebrew). The word 'Christ means God's Chosen One. The Jews were expecting the Christ to be a political figure, to deliver them from Roman oppression.

# A Question of Authority

## Jump Start

**How would you deal with the world if you had all the authority in the world?**

### Case Text: Mark 1.21-28

Then they went to Capernaum. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people there were amazed by his teaching, because he taught them like one who had authority, not like the experts in the law. Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "Leave us alone, Jesus the Nazarene! Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him: "Silence! Come out of him!" After throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed so that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands the unclean spirits and they obey him." So the news about him spread quickly throughout all the region around Galilee.

### Drill Through

1. What was so special about Jesus' teaching and authority that it amazed all who heard?
2. Why does the 'man with an unclean spirit' cry out in the middle of Jesus' teaching, what does it do to Jesus' teaching?
3. How does Jesus respond to the 'man with an unclean spirit'?

4. What does this passage teach us about Jesus and his authority?

### **Action Stations**

Here we see the 'unclean spirit' interrupting Jesus' teaching. What interrupts your relationship with God? What can Jesus do with it?

### *Notes*

*Sabbath: A weekly day of worship and rest for the Jews.*

*Synagogue: Jewish place of worship*

# Human Life

## Jump Start

**What in your opinion makes a human complete?**

### Mark 2.1-12

Now after some days, when he returned to Capernaum, the news spread that he was at home. So many gathered that there was no longer any room, not even by the door, and he preached the word to them. Some people came bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. When they were not able to bring him in because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Jesus. Then, after tearing it out, they lowered the stretcher the paralytic was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the experts in the law were sitting there, turning these things over in their minds: "Why does this man speak this way? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Now immediately, when Jesus realized in his spirit that they were contemplating such thoughts, he said to them, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand up, take your stretcher, and walk'? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,"—he said to the paralytic— "I tell you, stand up, take your stretcher, and go home." And immediately the man stood up, took his stretcher, and went out in front of them all. They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

### Drill Through

1. Why did the people bring the paralytic to Jesus?
2. Why did Jesus talk about forgiveness instead of just healing the man?

3. Why did the teachers of the Law take objection to what Jesus said? What was Jesus' response to their thinking?
  
4. From this event, what do you understand about Jesus and his concern for human beings?
  
5. If you were part of the crowd, how would you respond to Jesus?

### **Action Stations**

Which is easier to say – 'your sins are forgiven' or 'Stand up, take your stretcher and walk'? It's easier to say the first as it cannot be easily verified but in the case of the second one, if the paralytic is unable to walk it then it means – Jesus is a fraud!

Jesus is pointing to his authority to forgive sins by demonstrating his authority to heal. Is there a need for forgiveness in your life? What do you think?

# Faith

## Jump Start

**In what kind of situations, do you find it difficult to have faith?**

### **Mark 5.21-24, 35-43**

When Jesus had crossed again in a boat to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he was by the sea. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came up, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. He asked him urgently, "My little daughter is near death. Come and lay your hands on her so that she may be healed and live." Jesus went with him, and a large crowd followed and pressed around him.

*[Vs 25-34: Woman suffering from haemorrhage is healed]*

While he was still speaking, people came from the synagogue ruler's house saying, "Your daughter has died. Why trouble the teacher any longer?" But Jesus, paying no attention to what was said, told the synagogue ruler, "Do not be afraid; just believe." He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. They came to the house of the synagogue ruler where he saw noisy confusion and people weeping and wailing loudly. When he entered he said to them, "Why are you distressed and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep." And they began making fun of him. But he put them all outside and he took the child's father and mother and his own companions and went into the room where the child was. Then, gently taking the child by the hand, he said to her, "*Talitha kum*," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, get up." The girl got up at once and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). They were completely astonished at this. He strictly ordered that no one should know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

### **Drill Through**

1. What do we learn about Jairus, what kind of a person is he?
2. Why did Jesus go to Jairus' house even after being informed of the girl's death?

3. Death seems to be final, how does Jesus view death?
4. What is faith? What kind of faith Jesus is talking about?
5. Why was Jesus able to perform this astonishing miracle?
6. What would Jairus think about Jesus after witnessing this miracle?

### **Action Stations**

Death seems to be the antithesis of life yet it has much to teach us about life. What did you learn about life from this text?

Jesus gives a new life to Jairus' daughter, do you need a new life?



# Who is this Jesus?

## Jump Start

**According to you, what is the difference between fact and opinion?**

### **Mark 8:27-38**

Then Jesus and his disciples went to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said, "John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, one of the prophets." He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

#### First Prediction of Jesus' Death and Resurrection

When Jesus began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and experts in the law, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke openly about this. So Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But after turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan. You are not setting your mind on God's interests, but on man's."

Then Jesus called the crowd, along with his disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it. For what benefit is it for a person to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his life? What can a person give in exchange for his life? For if anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

### **Drill Through**

1. What is the people's opinion about Jesus in the passage?
2. Jesus is interested in knowing what disciples thought of him. How is Peter's opinion different from the others?

3. Why does Peter oppose Jesus' prediction of His death?
4. What kind of gain and loss is Jesus' talking about here?
5. Is there a connection between Jesus losing His life and we receiving new life? If yes, how? See vv. 31-33 & 35-36

### **Action Stations**

What is your opinion about Jesus, who is he?

### *Notes:*

*Elijah – He was one of the major prophets sent by God to Israel and Judah. Prophets used to speak to the people on behalf of God, warning them of their sinful ways.*

*John the Baptist – Son of Zechariah and Elizabeth. He came as a forerunner of Jesus Christ preparing the way for Him. He called for repentance and baptized whoever responded.*

*Messiah – A promised deliverer whom the Jews expected to deliver them from the hands of Romans. But Jesus came to deliver people from their sins.*

# People in Crisis

## Jump Start

### Do you trust Jesus?

#### Mark 4:35 –41

On that day, when evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go across to the other side of the lake." So after leaving the crowd, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat, and other boats were with him. Now a great windstorm developed and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was nearly swamped. But he was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. They woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care that we are about to die?" So he got up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Be quiet! Calm down!" Then the wind stopped, and it was dead calm. And he said to them, "Why are you cowardly? Do you still not have faith?" They were overwhelmed by fear and said to one another, "Who then is this? Even the wind and sea obey him!"

#### Drill Through

1. Several of the disciples are fishermen familiar with this lake's sudden storms, but this one is beyond their control. What possible fears are behind their wake-up call to Jesus?
2. Mention an experience when you felt God did not care when you struggled with a problem. What were your thoughts and feelings?
3. Look at Jesus' actions and His words. What clues to His identity do they give?
4. Jesus commanded the winds and the waves but He questioned the disciples' faith as well. What do you think He wanted them to do in that situation?

5. The disciples had previously seen Jesus only as teacher, healer, and deliverer. What do you think they are now discussing?

**Action Stations**

In what ways can you see from this incident that Jesus knows your situation and does care about you?

# Chosing Right

## Jump Start

What counts in today's world?

### Mark 10:17 - 27

Now as Jesus was starting out on his way, someone ran up to him, fell on his knees, and said, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: '*Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.*'" The man said to him, "Teacher, I have wholeheartedly obeyed all these laws since my youth." As Jesus looked at him, he felt love for him and said, "You lack one thing. Go, sell whatever you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follo me." But at this statement, the man looked sad and went away sorrowful, for he was very rich.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" The disciples were astonished at these words. But again Jesus said to them, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." They were even more astonished and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and replied, "This is impossible for mere humans, but not for God; all things are possible for God."

### Drill Through

1. How would you describe this man in today's terms?
2. He seems to have all that a young person can desire. Why did he still come to Jesus?

3. Considering the eagerness with which he came to Jesus. Why did he not do/accept what Jesus suggested?
4. What are some of the losses one must consider in following Jesus seriously?
5. How will these losses affect us?

### **Action Stations**

Is it worth giving up all to follow Jesus, why?

*Notes: Camel . . . eye of the needle – A humorous comparison to show the difficulty of the rich in entering God's kingdom because of their attachment to materialism.*

# A Leader with a difference

## Jump Start

What kind(s) of leaders do we admire?

### Mark 11:15 – 19

Then they came to Jerusalem. Jesus entered the temple area and began to drive out those who were selling and buying in the temple courts. He turned over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, and he would not permit anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. Then he began to teach them and said, "Is it not written: '*My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations*'? But you have turned it into a *den of robbers*!" The chief priests and the experts in the law heard it and they considered how they could assassinate him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed by his teaching. When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

### Drill Through

Visualize and sense the drama that the writer describes

1. If this is the first time you are seeing Jesus do anything like this? What would be your reaction? Why do you think Jesus is so passionate/angry?
2. The radical action of a young carpenter from the lowly town of Nazareth is bound to bring out the wrath of the religious establishment. What, in your opinion, threatens them?
3. What kind of a leader do you see in Jesus? Is He worth following?

4. What qualities do you find attractive in Jesus? What puzzles you about Him?

**Action Stations**

What are some issues that you see around you that needs to be confronted? What are some issues in your own life that needs to be confronted?



*Notes: Money changers: They did big business during festival time because foreigners who came to the temple had to change their money to temple currency to pay temple tax and for the purchase of sacrificial animals.*

# The Saviour Dies

## Jump Start

**What feelings do we experience when we hear the news of the death of someone we love?**

## Mark 15: 33 - 41

Now when it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. Around three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*" which means, "***My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?***" When some of the bystanders heard it they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah!" Then someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Leave him alone! Let's see if Elijah will come to take him down!" But Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed his last. And the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood in front of him, saw how he died, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!" There were also women, watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. When he was in Galilee, they had followed him and given him support. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were there too.

## Drill Through

1. List the events surrounding the death of Jesus\_ (Although there are many events here we have time only to focus on three of them).
2. Why, do you think, there was darkness at noon? (It was not a solar eclipse because it was a full moon day (Passover)).
3. Who was Jesus calling to? Why? What do you think it means for us today?

4. The Roman officer was a tough military person who would have witnessed several crucifixions. How and why did he come to such a conclusion about Jesus?
  
5. What do you think was the purpose of Jesus' death?

**Action Stations**

Reflect on this... Jesus died for our sins, He wants to forgive us. Does it make sense that the death of Jesus was the penalty paid for our sins?

# Death Defeated

## Jump Start

Is there life beyond death?

### Mark 16.1-8

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought aromatic spices so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, at sunrise, they went to the tomb. They had been asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled back. Then as they went into the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has been raised! He is not here. Look, there is the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples, even Peter, that he is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you." Then they went out and ran from the tomb, for terror and bewilderment had seized them. And they said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

### Drill Through

1. The Romans knew when a criminal was dead and, in addition, the Jewish authorities ensured that the tomb was carefully sealed and guarded. What made the women worried on the way to Jesus' tomb about and what did they find on arrival?
2. How would you have reacted in that situation? Why?

3. How does the resurrection of Jesus make him unique?

### **Action Stations**

Why is it so crucial to the story of the Gospel — Good News? (See I Corinthians 15:17- 19 & 26) 5. Reflect on this: Since Jesus rose from the dead and offers life after death, can there be anything that is better than this offer?

*Notes: Spices: They are aromatics. Bringing spices to the tomb was like bringing flowers to a grave today.*

# Jesus is coming back

## Jump Start

Usually in Indian languages, when we depart we say, "We are going and will come back..." Why?

## Mark 13:28 - 37

"Learn this parable from the fig tree: Whenever its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also you, when you see these things happening, know that he is near, right at the door. I tell you the truth, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

Be Ready!

"But as for that day or hour no one knows it—neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son—except the Father. Watch out! Stay alert! For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey. He left his house and put his slaves in charge, assigning to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to stay alert. Stay alert, then, because you do not know when the owner of the house will return—whether during evening, at midnight, when the rooster crows, or at dawn— or else he might find you asleep when he returns suddenly. What I say to you I say to everyone: Stay alert!"

## Drill Through

The death and Resurrection of Jesus are not the end of the story. Jesus promised to return. He also said certain signs would indicate His coming back.

1. What are some of the signs listed for us in this passage?
2. Why are we told to be on guard and alert?

3. How are we to prepare for Jesus' coming?

4. Why is Jesus returning, according to vv. 27?

### **Action Stations**

We have examined who Jesus is and what He has done through these studies. In the light of His return, once again we are faced with the question: Who is this Jesus? Would you like to follow him or reject him?