

Chapter 4:

The Gospel of Mark: Jesus the Suffering Servant

Student Preparation

- Students were asked to read Chapter 4, pages 116-143.
- Students were assigned to complete Chapter 3 Review Questions 1-10 and 15-17 on page 112.

Note: If possible, have extra copies of Bibles on hand for students who do not bring them. Alternatively, you can make and distribute copies of the first four chapters of Mark's Gospel.

Warm-up (about 20 minutes)

- Lead students in a brief opening prayer, thanking God for his presence in all the events of our lives.
- Share and discuss the students' responses to Chapter 3 Review Questions which they completed prior to this session. Answers may be found on pages 91-93 of the Teacher's Manual.
- Ask students to imagine that they work for a television station that has decided to prepare a documentary on an influential public figure. Help them choose a person with whom they are reasonably familiar and whose vision has influenced the world. Divide the class into small groups. Have each student generate a list of topics which should be covered in such a list. Gather the students together and develop a cumulative list. Use this list as a reference as students read and reflect about the Gospel of Mark. Have them consider the ways in which the four Gospels do or do not cover themes considered important according to the suggestions on the list.

Part 1:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: Faith Perspective, Background on Mark's Gospel, Mark's Gospel Reveals Jesus, Jesus the Healer and Miracle Worker (pages 117-128)

- Review the Faith Perspective on page 117. Invite students to remember a time when a change in perspective caused them to see someone differently.
- Attach a piece of poster board to a wall. Over the next four lessons, you can use this visual to help students organize and remember the similarities and differences among the Gospels. At the top of the poster board, write: **Author, Audience, Date, Place, Purpose and Themes**. Have the students as a group fill in the answers for the Gospel of Mark, using page 119 as a reference.
- Mark's Gospel emphasizes two questions: "Who is Jesus?" and "Will you follow him?" (page 120). Have students imagine they are welcoming a person newly arrived in the United States who has never heard of Jesus Christ. Ask them to write a paragraph explaining who Jesus is and what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Have them share their paragraphs; gently challenge students from the perspective of someone who is completely unfamiliar with Christianity.
- Ask students to review the definition of authority found on page 122. Have them describe ways in which Jesus fits this definition. Then ask students to give examples of people they have known or heard about who seem to have a sense of inner confidence and authority that causes people to listen to and follow them. Invite them to share the kinds of positive impact such people can have on those around them.
- Show the last 15 minutes of the movie *Oh God!* with George Burns, beginning with the trial scene. This segment shows some of the ways people react when in the presence of miracles. Ask students to speculate on what their own reactions might be if confronted with a miracle.

Break/Reading Exercise (about 15 minutes)

- Join students for a break with refreshments.
- Have students read chapters 3-6 of Mark. Many students have only heard segments of the Gospel read at Mass; they have never read a Gospel continuously. Ask them to approach their reading as if this were a letter someone wrote describing a friend. Ask each student to choose one verse or story and respond with a comment or question. What do they find puzzling or impressive? What kind of person does Jesus seem to be in these stories?

Part 2:

Lesson (about 30 minutes)

Text Reference: The Way of Discipleship, The Paschal Mystery in Mark's Gospel (pages 129-142)

- Have one student read aloud Mark 8:34-35 on page 129. Brainstorm with students the ways in which Jesus approached suffering: with courage and generosity, without striking out in anger, accepting of God's will. Ask students to journal about what it means to carry a cross in today's world. Have them write about suffering they have experienced in their own lives or observed in the lives of others. Ask them to reflect on why Jesus tells us that carrying a cross, and losing our lives, is necessary. What spiritual benefits can come from suffering?
- Have students read the story of the rich young man covered on page 131. Give them time to write in their journals and then share their responses to the questions at the bottom of the page.
- Have students share the results of their research on Jewish-Christian relations. A cross-section of topics will reveal the presence of intense persecution of Jewish people over the years. Some of this persecution has been considered justified because of Jewish people's involvement in Jesus' death. Some Jewish people were concerned that the movie *The Passion* might trigger renewed anti-Semitism in the United States. Ask students who have seen the movie whether watching the brutality accompanying Jesus' death causes them to have any similar concerns. Review page 134 with them. Invite students to share any examples of anti-Semitism they may have observed in their community. Remind students that Jesus would call us not only to refrain from such activity, but also to confront such disrespectful behavior in others.
- Invite students to do the journal exercise in page 140. Have them share the obituaries they write for Jesus with one another.
- The Paschal Mystery refers to Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection. We humans experience suffering, death, and new beginnings in our lives as well. Brainstorm with students some examples of this cycle of death and rebirth. Examples can be taken from movies, the news, or lives of famous people.

Prayer Experience (about 20 minutes)

- Arrange your prayer space with a candle, a space for a Bible, and some music.
- Use page 135 as a guide in helping students learn a meditative approach to reading and praying with Scripture. After some initial discomfort, students are generally very receptive to meditative quiet time, especially in the presence of soothing music and guidance in their process.
- Select one passage from the several listed on pages 135-140. Help the students to find a comfortable position for prayer, one in which they can be alert but comfortable. Use your own words, or the following script, spoken slowly and calmly:

Now that you are comfortable, set aside all of the worries and stresses you brought with you today. Begin by taking a deep breath. . . . and exhale. Another deep breath. . . . and exhale. One more deep breath, from deep down in your abdomen. . . . and exhale

Depending on time constraints, you can direct the students in a progressive relaxation. This may be as simple as, "Take a few moments to relax your body. Become aware of areas in your body where you are feeling tension, and let that tension go."

Remember that we are in God's presence at this moment. God's love surrounds us all. God is aware of all our concerns, and holds each of us in his tender care today and always.

As we read a passage from St. Mark's Gospel, visualize the scene as clearly as you can. Imagine that you are there, a member of the crowd, watching what is happening.

Then slowly read the selected passage. After a pause, continue,

Take a moment to ask Jesus what he wants you, today, to learn from this passage. Open your heart to whatever message this Scripture passage may hold for you today.

After a pause for reflection, close with,

Thank you, Lord, for your constant love for us. Thank you for coming to be one of us, for sharing in our sufferings and our joys. Please help me to be mindful of your presence as I go forward into the week ahead. Amen.

- Give students a few moments of quiet before bringing the session to a close.

Conclusion (5 minutes)

- Assign Chapter 4 Review Questions 1-14 on page 142.
- Direct students to read Chapter 5: on the Gospel of Matthew (pages 144-169) in preparation for the next session.
- Ask students to journal about a “Paschal Mystery” experience in their own lives. This can be a relatively small or a major event. Invite them to consider how Jesus may have been present to them through this experience.
- Encourage students to bring a Bible with them to the next class.