THE GOSPEL OF MARK

VOLUME 2 / SERMON-BASED DISCUSSION GUIDE

FALL SEASON Sep 27 – Dec 6 / WINTER SEASON Jan 11 – Mar 14

AT A GLANCE

MAIN TEXT	MAIN IDEA
Mark 4:21–34	Disciples make God's truth visible, listen carefully to His Word, and faithfully cultivate conditions for growth. Through consistent steps of obedience, they trust God to produce lasting fruit.

LEADER GROWTH FOCUS

SHARING LEADERSHIP

This week, ask someone else to lead a portion of your group gathering - whether the opening icebreaker, a discussion section, or the closing prayer. If someone comes to mind, reach out before your group meets and invite them ahead of time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / EMERGENCE.CHURCH/DIGITAL-BULLETIN

01 Student Retreat · Feb 19-21 @ High Point Camp - an awesome time for students to unplug, get immersed in community with their peers and leaders, and hear the word. Year over year, we hear stories of students who encounter God in news ways during these times. **Register before Thanksgiving for a special discount!**

02 2027 Short-Term Missions - Whether it's right here in our backyard in North Jersey or around the globe, God calls us to share the good news of Jesus! We are so excited to share that we have multiple short-term mission opportunities coming up next year headed to Colombia and the Philippines.

GETTING STARTED

01 Icebreaker Would you rather solve a mystery with Sherlock Holmes or go on an adventure with Indiana Jones?

02 Pray Ask God to help everyone be open and responsive to His Word.

03 Community Extras Video (length 4:50 – questions from video are included below)

LAST WEEK'S GROWTH STEP FOLLOW-UP

LEADERS Keep follow-up casual and low-pressure. "If you were able to try this last week, how did it go?" Sharing is optional; passing is always okay.

OUTWARD ACTION	INWARD PRAYER
Share honestly with a trusted Christian friend about your walk with Jesus. Share where you're seeing fruit, where you're struggling, and ask them to help keep you accountable.	Ask God where there is hardness, shallowness, or distraction that needs attention. Pray, "Jesus, help me hold on to Your Word, grow deep roots of faith, and keep bearing fruit that lasts."

LEADER NOTES / FOLLOW-UPS

SERMON DISCUSSION

PRIORITIZE MEANINGFUL CONVERSATION OVER GETTING THROUGH EVERY QUESTION.

01 Put the Lamp on the Stand

READ Mark 4:21–22

Jesus says a lamp is meant to give light, not to be hidden. Pastor Ryan described two ways we can keep God's truth from being seen: hiding it out of fear, or resisting it when it challenges how we want to live. Disciples let the truth of Jesus become visible in ordinary life in both what they know and how they live.

01 What might it look like for God's truth to be "on display" in everyday life, whether at home, at work, or among friends?

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02 Is there an area where you tend to hide your faith out of fear, or resist obeying something God has made clear? What would it look like to put the lamp on the stand there?

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02 Pay Attention to How You Hear

READ Mark 4:23–25

Jesus tells His listeners to pay attention to what they hear. Pastor Ryan emphasized that disciples come to God's Word with an eagerness to receive it and respond. Unlike physical hunger, spiritual hunger often increases when we feed it. Yet, it can fade so gradually when neglected that we barely notice.

01 Why do you think spiritual hunger can grow as we regularly engage with God's Word, but weaken when we neglect it?

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02 What is one simple change you could make this week to approach God's Word more expectantly and respond to what you hear?

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03 Faithful Work, God-Given Growth

READ Mark 4:26–29

The farmer scatters seed and goes about his daily life, but he cannot make the seed grow. In the same way, we are called to be faithful while trusting God to transform hearts. Pastor Ryan warned that when we try to do the Holy Spirit's job for Him, our efforts can turn into fear, pressure, or manipulation.

01 What does the farmer actually do in this parable, and what happens beyond his ability to control?

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02 Why do you think our desire to help someone grow can sometimes turn into pressuring or trying to change them ourselves?

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03 Is there someone whose spiritual growth you feel responsible for? What would it look like to faithfully love and encourage them while trusting God to change their heart?

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FOR LEADERS

Clarify that trusting God does not mean passivity. We can pray, model faith, speak truth graciously, set wise boundaries, and love faithfully, without claiming control over another person's heart.

04 Stay in the Greenhouse

More application from Mark 4:26-29

Spiritual growth is usually organic, not instant. Pastor Ryan described four "walls" of a discipleship greenhouse: weekend worship gathering, Christian community, serving with our gifts, and personal disciplines like Scripture, prayer, and generosity. Special experiences can be helpful, but they cannot replace a life rooted in these ordinary rhythms.

01 Why might steady practices like worship, community, serving, and personal disciplines shape us more deeply over time than an occasional spiritual high?

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02 Which of these four "walls" could use some strengthening in your life right now? What would a realistic, sustainable step look like for you?

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05

The Power of a Mustard Seed

READ Mark 4:30–34 · Galatians 6:9

Jesus describes God's Kingdom as a tiny mustard seed that grows far beyond what its small beginning would suggest. Pastor Ryan connected that picture to a life built through small, repeated acts of obedience. We may underestimate what God can do over years of ordinary faithfulness—and past failures do not have to define what we plant today.

01 What does the mustard seed teach us about the way God works through beginnings that seem small or unimpressive?

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02 Who has shaped your faith through years of ordinary faithfulness? What small things did they do that made a lasting difference?

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03 Where might discouragement, slow progress, or past failure be keeping you from taking a step forward? What is one "mustard seed" act of faithfulness you can begin now?

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GROWTH STEP THIS WEEK

OUTWARD ACTION

Choose one truth from God's Word that you already know but need to live out more visibly. Take one specific, manageable step of obedience this week.

INWARD PRAYER

Pray: "Jesus, make me eager to hear and quick to obey. Help me be faithful with the small things, trust You to bring growth, and not grow weary when results are slow."

PRAYER PROMPTS

Use these as starting points, or invite someone to pray freely to close.

- Thank Jesus for bringing the truth of God into the light and transforming us through His grace.
- Ask God for ears eager to hear Scripture and hearts willing to respond in obedience.
- Pray for wisdom to encourage others faithfully without trying to control their hearts.
- Ask God to strengthen our rhythms of worship, community, service, and personal disciplines.
- Pray for perseverance in small acts of faithfulness, especially where growth feels slow.
- Thank Jesus for His death and resurrection, and for the hope of a new beginning through Him.

READ AHEAD Mark 4:35–5:20