

# Discipleship and Mission discussion guide

based on **Mark 6** (Linked to sermon of 04/2/24)  
which can be accessed at [www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks](http://www.stjamesbythepark.org/talks)

*This was part of a series on intentional discipleship.*

## **Read Mark 6: 1- 6**

*At the start of Chapter 6 we see Jesus continuing to teach in his usual brilliant way about faith by taking the disciples back to his home town. Jesus teaches in the synagogue on the Sabbath and at first it looks like he is being well received: 'many who heard him were amazed'. They recognise his wisdom and the fact that elsewhere he is performing remarkable miracles. But before long their amazement turns to resentment and insult as they think about his background. They remember he was a manual labourer and had no formal religious training. They remember there was always some talk about who his father actually was. In Jewish culture people were identified with their father – look at the genealogies where so and so was the father of so and so etc. But here the people from Jesus' home town ask, 'Isn't this Mary's son?' – the implication being that the identity of his father is unknown and therefore he is illegitimate. They're looking down at him. 'How can someone like that think he can teach us?' They couldn't see past what they thought they already knew about him. And this resulted in a lack of faith in Jesus. In fact Mark reports that Jesus was 'amazed at their lack of faith' and that he was limited in the miracles he could do there because of this.*

1. What are the dangers of thinking that we've got Jesus all worked out?
2. How has your understanding of who Jesus is developed over time?
3. Mark seems to be highlighting a link between the people's faith and Jesus' ability to perform miracles (see also Mark 5: 21- 43). What did Jesus mean by faith do you think?

## **Richard Rohr writes about faith:**

*'If we are not trained in a trust of mystery and some degree of tolerance for ambiguity and suffering, we will not proceed very far on the spiritual journey...Thus the Biblical tradition, and Jesus in particular, praises faith more than love. Why? Because faith is that patience with mystery that allows us to negotiate the stages (of spiritual life)...It allows God to lead us through darkness – where God knows and we don't. This is the only way to come to love! Love is the true goal, but faith is the process of getting there, and hope is the willingness to live without resolution or closure.'*

4. What is helpful about this understanding of faith? What would you want to add or change?

## **Read Mark 6:7-13**

5. What is your understanding and experience of 'mission'?

*I don't know what you think of when you hear the word 'mission' but for me it has quite negative connotations. It makes me think of aggressive, colonial attitudes, targets, military planning, clinical objectives. Maybe that's just me! So, I was really encouraged to explore in my reading for this talk the concept of Missio Dei, which*

*means 'the mission of God' or 'the sending of God'. God is the 'sending' God – sending the Son (Jesus) and the Spirit and the Church.*

*This understanding of mission puts God at the centre and forefront and recognises the work of the church as only PART of God's work on earth. We are invited to join in with His work to bring wholeness and forgiveness and everything good to the world. It is not OUR mission, but God's mission, which he graciously and joyfully allows us to join him in. For me, that was a helpful shift in understanding because it means that I am not responsible for the healing of the whole world. God is God and I am Jen. He sends me to particular people and situations to JOIN IN with what He is already doing there. Without the pressure to 'save' this person or situation by myself, I can be more present, listen more deeply, be that 'non-anxious' presence that speaks of God's peace. If I mess up (and believe me this happens on at least an hourly basis!), the Missio Dei continues! God's entire plan is not thwarted by my ineptitude! I can't tell you the relief and freedom and joy this has brought me!*

6. How do you feel about being invited to join in with the Missio Dei?

Jesus gave his disciples several instructions for their mission. We noted how these were specific instructions for these particular disciples on this particular mission, but that we could draw some helpful principal from them, which can be summarised as:

- i) Don't go it alone** – mission is best when undertaken with other disciples.
- ii) Travel light** – learn to rely on God for resources and think about what heavy loads you need to lay down to help you.
- iii) Relationship is vital** – the way we deliver our message is as important as the message itself. Respect, faithfulness and love are needed.
- iv) Don't take rejection to heart** – it's part of the package. Jesus was rejected and sometimes so will we be when we share his message. Leave those people to God.

7. Which of these principals resonates most with you at the moment? How can you support one another in your group as you share God's love with others?

When the disciples returned from their mission (Mark 6:30-31) they had many stories to share with him but they were also tired. Jesus said to them 'Come away with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest'.

*When you have been giving out it's important to rest and receive. This ebb and flow of giving and receiving is a natural rhythm and keeps us healthy in our spiritual life. Neglecting either one of these parts will lead to stagnation or burnout. We can't bless others without first being blessed by Jesus, and when we've been blessed by Jesus we have the resources and desire to go out and bless others. It's a cyclical rhythm that will continue our whole lives.*

- 8. How could a lack of giving lead to stagnation? (Look up why the Dead Sea is dead.)
- 9. How does the ebb and flow of giving and receiving work out in your life? What can you put in place to ensure you're getting a balanced rhythm of both?