



### Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

*Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an **opportunity to share**, not something you have to do, however, 'it's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



### Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

*Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours; or church, which you would like to share (please be careful not to pass on anything that is **confidential** or which you think the person/people concerned would not wish to be shared) for:*

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

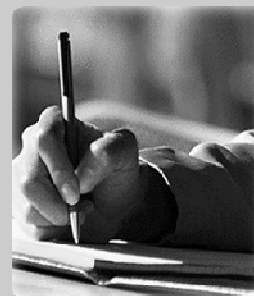


## HG32: Living With Jesus (2/5) *New Understanding*

**Mark 8 vs 27 - 30**

### Home Group Study Notes

30th May 2010 - Pauline Woolnough



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN  
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION  
**BEFORE THE MEETING!**

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group  
with you, along with any previous notes and  
other resources that might be helpful.*



### Welcome/Ice Breaker (10 mins)

We are different things to different people and they all see different sides of us. Think of the many identities you have, who would people say you were?



### Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise, or listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers; etc.





## Looking Upwards (40 mins) *Bible Study*

Read through the text for this study, Mark 8:27-30, and any references given below, alongside those in the sermon notes, then answer the following questions - you may find it helpful to read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss your answers with your Home Group.

**1:** What was it that made you believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God?

**2:** The people did not understand who Jesus was, it took a while for the truth to become clear to the disciples - and they lived with him!! Do you think that God makes it difficult for us to believe in him? What do you think is the biggest impediment to faith in Jesus?

**3:** Do you have answers for people when they voice their concerns about issues such as: suffering in the world; why a good God would allow people to go to hell; evolution verses intelligent design etc?

The people were looking for and waiting for a political Messiah, one who would deliver them from the hated Roman government. The messiah they were waiting for was like some Marvel Comic super hero, he would come crashing into the world, and champion the people, He'd make war with their enemies and smash them into oblivion. He would rebuild Jerusalem and draw back the dispersed Jews from all over the world to a Jewish nation that would be the centre of the world. At the time of Jesus the people expected a violent nationalistic and vengeful messiah completely opposite to the character of Jesus. They would never have understood or accepted him as their Messiah at this moment in time because there was no room in their messianic vision for a cross and a suffering Saviour. It was no wonder they crucified him in the end for being a heretic. It was crucial that the disciples themselves realised who Jesus was but until they actually understood why he came, they'd never be able to proclaim his message.

Today's reading is a real opportunity to rediscover Jesus all over again. Is he the One we first met when we gave our lives to him, the one we put our faith in and trusted, the One we got excited about? Is He the One for whom nothing is impossible, who can do immeasurably more than we could ever hope or dream of? Is he the Jesus of the scriptures or One that we have ourselves invented? Are we disappointed in him because he doesn't give us the things we ask for, but that that he never said that he would, things that were never the reason he came for in the first place. This is an opportunity to encounter once more the real Jesus of the scriptures. And when we find him, and discover the answer to that question—we find ourselves. When we find him we find that we are not just some accident of evolution, we are more than where we live, more than what job we do, we are more than what education we have. Above all we find we are not alone anymore, we are loved, treasured, chosen and special, made in God's image and by His grace and through His Spirit he is changing us into who he destined us to be. When we find him, we find ourselves.

### **Understanding should make a difference.**

And if like Peter I make the bold declaration for myself that Jesus is indeed the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Lord, the Son of the living God, what effect should that have on my life? Is he Lord of my time, is He Lord of how I live my life? Are His priorities my priorities? Has knowing Him as my Lord conquered my fears for today and those of the future? If He really is my Lord will I put aside differences I have with others, will I offer Him the gifts and talents for His use that he gave me in the first place, will I praise Him even when my heart is broken and he doesn't seem to be listening? If He is my Lord, is my life and how I live it pleasing and useful to Him, will I love and care for those that he loves and am I willing to accept not just his offer of eternal life but his desire to tell me how he wants me to live this life I lead now? Who is Jesus to you?

Recommended reading for those tricky questions people love to ask - *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel. Also by Lee Strobel - *The Case for Christ*, and *The Case for the Creator*.

Does that describe the Jesus you know? God wanted to come and share in the experiences of our lives, to share in our suffering, and grieving but also to experience our loving, laughter, joy and fun and its is clear through the gospels that Jesus experienced all these things, he knew anger and grief, friendship and fear he knew pain and he experienced death. We have a Saviour who lived life to the full and then gave it up on our behalf.

#### **Why do some people never understand?**

But if He is the Messiah and the Anointed One, why is it that so many people reject him. Why if Christianity is the truth is it making slow progress in the developed world, why are there few converts from other world religions? One reason is that Jesus asks so much of us. Jesus asks us to come to him in complete humility, to give Him total commitment and to surrender to His will. He will therefore always face resistance. He challenges us how we live our lives and although he offers us eternal life, he also wants to change what we want to do with this life. Not everyone is willing to submit to His authority. Many are happy to believe that they can be good and live a good life without the help of Jesus Christ, but Jesus never came to make men and women good, he came to make the dead alive to God.

The real Jesus is one who is rarely spoken of and seldom encountered today, doubts in his goodness and His desire to help us and be involved in our lives hinder and prevent us from trusting him enough even to ask for his help in the first place. How often do you hear people say, *“Oh I don’t pray for myself, oh no, I’ll pray for others, but it doesn’t seem right to pray for myself”* Jesus prayed to His Father for himself all the time, he could not have done what he did if he never asked his Father for help and He wants to hear us tell him about the things that personally worry us, that way our relationship with Him deepens.

Jesus was full life, full of the Spirit and full of passion, a commodity often in short supply today. We sing of joy yet find it hard to display or share it and worship seems such a serious business or at least we seem to make it serious, just take a look at the church sometimes at worship. The Jesus Peter knew would dance before God enthusiastically giving Him all his attention because his heart’s intent is simply to praise knowing that worship should give public expression to the unsurpassable worthiness of God. Jesus started a movement that set his disciples and followers on fire and went on to change the world and turn it upside down. We’d love him to set us on fire again today, but before he sends fire of revival on us there’s the good chance that he may expect some form of soul searching and repentance from his church that has somehow managed to change His identity and water down Peter’s bold declaration “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

#### **Don’t tell a soul.....not literally!!**

After Peter’s declaration Jesus told the disciples to keep quiet about it, not to say a word to anyone about who He was. Now, ironically out of all the instructions that Jesus gave to his church that’s the one that we seem to be quite good at and we have no difficulty in following. Well its what he said isn’t it? Don’t tell anyone about me, and that’s exactly what we do most of the time. We tell no one, we carry out this instruction rather well, because we don’t tell people about Him do we, we mostly keep Jesus to ourselves, (only carrying out instructions, shhhh .... “tell no one.”) Maybe the reason we don’t share Jesus with others is because we ourselves are uncomfortable with the kind of Jesus we have created, we’ve made him rather tame and kept him hidden and locked up, but if we are not fired up and passionate about him how can we expect others to want to know Him.

But why *did* he tell them to keep quiet? Well the disciples themselves had much to learn about Jesus, about his mission and what it really meant to follow him and they would only really understand the truth about him after his death and resurrection.

**4:** If you were God what would you do to make it easier for people to believe in him?

**5:** Who is Jesus to you? What is He like? Is He close, distant or elusive? Are you fired up and passionate about Jesus, the Anointed One, the Messiah? What can you do to help you see Him clearer?

**6:** If He is the Holy One and you have accepted Him as your Lord, how has that changed your life? What changes still need to be made? Has this study made you rethink just who Jesus is to you?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



## HG32: Living With Jesus (2/5) *New Understanding*

### Mark 8 vs 27 - 30

### Home Group Study Notes

30th May 2010 - Pauline Woolnough

#### Introduction.

There are just 3 short verses in our study but as so often is the case, its quality... not quantity that matters because but out of the 31,171 verses in the whole of the Bible, today's reading contains *the* question that everyone needs to ask themselves. In Mark chapter 8 verse 27 Jesus asked Peter the question, "*Who do you say I am?*" The answer to this question is quite simply, life and death. It affects not just where we spend eternity but how we live our lives day to day.

#### People did not understand who Jesus was.

We're exactly half way through Mark's gospel and up to this point Jesus had been showing through his actions and his teachings who he is. He fed 5000 at one sitting and 4000 at another, he had walked on water, exorcised demons and healed many people including the deaf and the blind. His words and his works gave evidence to the people that He was the Son of God, the Messiah, yet previously in Mark 8:11 we see the people asking him to prove himself again by giving a miraculous sign from heaven, where have they been? We caught a glimpse of His exasperation in vs12 when he said, "*Why do you people keep demanding a miraculous sign? I assure you, I will not give this generation any such sign.*" Whatever Jesus did it was never enough for some people as sadly it still is never enough for some people today.

So now at Caesarea Philippi Jesus decided it was time to pop the question. It was a town with quite a history, it had previously been called Balinas because it had once been a centre for the worship of the pagan god Baal. Legend had it that it was also the birthplace of the Greek god Pan, and there was a temple that had been built in honour of the Roman Emperor Caesar, who was also regarded as a god. All around were signs and echoes of pagan worship and for some reason Jesus chose this place to put his disciples to the test. If they didn't realise who he was, then who would? All he had done would be in vain. If you ever worry about your ministry and whether you are getting it right, whether what you are doing is having any effect, or if it is worth carrying on, then you have a champion in Jesus, he knows what that feels like. Up to this point he had done all he possibly could, yet people still wanted more proof and even his disciples seemed not to understand who he was. The problem for Jesus and the question he needed answered was, had anyone worked out who he really was? If no one, especially those closest to him, had seen God in Him and worked out who he was then, what now?

#### The ultimate question about Jesus.

At first when the disciples were asked who he was they gave the answers that they were hearing all around them, "*Some people say you are Elijah all over again.*" "*Some people say you are John the Baptist.*" "*Some people say you are a prophet.*" But Jesus says "*Never mind what 'they' are saying, it's time for you to speak for yourselves. Who do you say that I am?*"

#### A new understanding.

It was Peter who gave voice to his thoughts. He could have said you're my best friend Jesus, he could have said you're son of Mary and Joseph, he could have said you're our rabbi or teacher but deep down in his spirit he knew that Jesus was much more than all these things. This question made him realise and face up to what he had known for a while. His glorious friend Jesus was the Messiah, he was the Anointed One, the Son of God. Jesus Christ puts the same question to every generation and how we answer the question determines how the church lives and grows. Jesus puts the same question to each of us when he says, "*Who do you say that I am? Never mind what anyone else is saying; who do you say that I am?*" We can't rely on how our parents and grandparents answered that question, we can't rely on the faith of loved ones around us, we can't rely on the faith of our leaders, we all have to do our own believing. God has no grandchildren, only children. The Spirit of God works in each generation and what he did in our parents or grandparents time lasts for a season. Each new generation needs to seek God for itself and find out what it is He needs to do in their own time.

#### Who is Jesus to you?

At the heart of today's reading lies the issue we all need to face, which is: "Who is Jesus Christ for me?" and in our quiet times and home groups we need to reflect on this question. Who is Jesus Christ for you? What is he like for you, how have you formed your idea of him? Is he distant, is he remote, is he some kind of wispy, elusive shadowy figure, - or is he real and close to you? Often the pictures we have in our minds of Jesus are the ones that we formed when we were young, pictures we saw in books, images trapped in stained glass windows, or artists impressions, invariably portrayed as slim pale and serene. Perhaps one reason that the number of men in particular in church is declining or not growing, is because Jesus is often portrayed as a rather delicate, sometimes unmanly figure, meek and gentle. He comes over a bit like the 19th century nursery rhyme description of what little girls are made of "sugar and spice and all things nice" rather than "frogs and snails and puppy dogs tails" and certainly not the kind of man that earthy fishermen, sly dodgy tax collectors or unsavoury outcasts would have followed.

The kind of Jesus that Peter knew was physically fit, strong and energetic, he was good company, people wanted to be around him, he was intelligent, vital, and tireless. He was always on the go, always giving out to crowds who flocked to follow him. When he did get to bed it was late, and then he was first up, off and out, up some mountain in search of solitude where he could be alone with his Father, which of course was His secret, the time he spent alone with God. The gospels have no place for a pale, delicate Jesus, who goes around wearing a long clean white nightdress, Jesus lived a hectic rough and Spartan lifestyle, alongside 12 other strong tough opinionated men, he would have been the outdoors type, fit and strong, always challenging, always outspoken, always brave and it was only through his close contact with God that he managed to keep going and survive.

One of my favourite descriptions of Jesus was given by Lord Hailsham, the former Lord Chancellor. He describes how the person of Jesus came alive to him in his book *The Door Wherein I Went*. He says:

*"The first thing we must learn about him is that we should have been absolutely entranced by his company. Jesus was irresistibly attractive as a man.... What they crucified was a young man vital, full of life and the joy of it, the Lord of life itself, and even more the Lord of laughter, someone so utterly attractive that people followed him for the sheer fun of it.... the twentieth century needs to recapture the vision of the glorious and happy man whose mere presence filled his companions with delight. No pale Galilean, he but a veritable Pied Piper of Hamelin, who would have the children laughing all around him and squealing with pleasure and joy as he picked them up."*