



MARK

HPUMC BIBLE READING PLAN

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 3



CONVERSATION STARTER

What's the one snack or treat you could never live without?

THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Mark 10:17-34

In this week's reading, we meet a rich young man who wants to know the secret to inheriting eternal life. Doubtless, this is a question all of us have asked at some point in our journey. But this man likely has in mind something different than us today.

Scholar and Theologian NT Wright explains, "A long Christian tradition, of course, has assumed that he wanted to know how he could be sure of going to heaven when he died, but that wasn't how he would have put it. God was going to make the whole world a new place; when that happened, you wouldn't want to be away in a disembodied heaven, but here on earth to enjoy the great blessing."

Indeed, the central question of the Bible is not how to get bad people into a good heaven; it's how to bring more of heaven to earth as part of the new creation. John Mark Comer, Pastor and Author, says it like this: "For Jesus, salvation is less about getting you into heaven and **more about getting heaven into you.**"

The rich young man wants to know what he needs to *do*. He wants a checklist he can follow in order to get the outcome he desires. Can't you relate? How often do we get consumed by our doing *for* God instead of being *with* God?

Jesus gently reminds him this isn't how the Kingdom of God works. God is after wholehearted allegiance, not what we're able to accomplish. Jesus corrects the young man on this misunderstanding by conducting a thought experiment. Jesus says, *okay, you view the kingdom as a to-do list? Then how far are you willing to go?*

Do not murder. *Check.*

- Do not commit adultery. *Check.*
- Do not bear false witness. *Check.*
- Do not defraud. *Check.*
- Honor your father and mother. *Check.*

The young man proudly claims to have marked off each of these boxes. *No problem! What else do you have for me, Jesus?*

- Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor.
- And come, follow me.

Jesus invites the man to leave everything he has behind (we're told that's a lot) and dedicate his life to following Jesus. I wonder which of these to-do's were too much for him? At which point did the cost of discipleship become too great?

This man is extended the invitation to become a student of rabbi Jesus. And he declines. I wonder if this is because he values *his vision for his life* more than *Jesus' vision for his life*.

What about you? What *wouldn't* you give up to follow Jesus? At what point would you count the cost too high?

For Jesus, there was no cost too steep. The Savior of the world went willingly to the cross in order to gather you close to him. That's how much he loves you. That's the price he's willing to pay for even the *chance* you will say *yes* to following him. I love how Rev. Rasmussen said it at Christmas, "You are worth *Jesus* to God."

Spend a few moments discussing this idea with your group. How would you put into words the cost of following Jesus? What do you think our world tends to value more than following Jesus?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. Peter rebukes Jesus when he predicts his death (Mark 8:31-33). Are there times when your own expectations or desires conflict with God's plans? How do you respond in those moments?

3. In a world where people are constantly striving and clawing for power, Jesus reveals the true nature of leadership—to serve others in humility. How do you see this kind of leadership on display in our world today?
4. Read Mark 9:42-50 together as a group. What do you think this passage is saying about how Jesus views sin and how we ought to deal with sin in our lives?

WEEKLY PRACTICE

This January, we're seeking to be people who are cultivating the fruit of kindness in our lives in partnership with the Spirit. What's the best way to build our kindness muscle? **The practice of radical generosity!**

This week, spend some time in prayer using the words of St. Ignatius. As you pray, ask God to highlight opportunities where you can be intentionally and radically *generous* this week.

Dear Lord teach me to be generous; teach me to serve you as you deserve, to give and not to count the cost, to fight and not to heed the wounds, to labor and not to ask for reward, save that of knowing that I do your will. Amen.