

## **SMALL GROUP GUIDE: THE BEAUTIFUL UPSET**

### **WEEK 1 - The Confession We Don't Understand**

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

**OPENING QUESTION:** When did you first begin to believe that Jesus truly is your Lord? Was it at your baptism? Before then? After then? Not sure yet?

#### **HEAD**

1. Read Mark 8:27-38, together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. Why do you think Peter was so quick to be the first one to answer almost all of Jesus' questions? Do you think Peter knew Jesus was the Messiah, or simply hoped he was the Messiah?
3. Why do you think other Jews were reluctant to think of Jesus as the Messiah?
4. From what you know, what did the typical Jew in this time believe the Messiah was going to come to do?
5. Why would Jesus instruct his disciples not to tell others who he is?
6. Did Jesus refer to Peter as Satan, or the spirit of what he said? Explain.

#### **HEART**

1. It has been said that the question, "Who do you say I am?" is the most important question ever asked. If true, why?
2. What about you, who do you say that He is? How is this belief shown in how you live your life?
3. Jesus told them that to follow him would involve taking up your cross. There only reference point for this at the time was thieves and rebels dying at the hand of the empire. So how do you think they processed this before Jesus' death on the cross? What about after?
4. What are some of the ways we gain the whole world but lose our soul? How do we prevent this from happening?
5. Jesus wasn't the Messiah they wanted, but he was the one that they needed. In what ways do you need the Messiah to show up in your life today and if he did, what do you think he'd have to say to you?

**HANDS:** This week, we invite you to pray and think about 2-3 people in your sphere of influence that you may have the opportunity to invite to join a Crosswalk campus for worship this Easter, April 4. Also, take some time to really think through who you say Jesus is, and right out your answer. Pray about it, reflect on it, come back to it often.

#### **WORDS TO LIVE BY**

*29 Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah."*

*Mark 8:29, NLT*

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**WEEK 2 - The Glory WE Can't Hold Onto**

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

**OPENING QUESTION:** Think back to a spiritual experience you've had in your life that you would call a "mountain-top" experience. What happened and why was it so meaningful to you?

**HEAD**

1. Read Mark 9:1-29, together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. What do you think the significance was of Jesus being transformed into dazzling white in this moment?
3. Why was he able to talk to Moses and Elijah? What significance might that have had and what do you think they were talking about?
4. In verse 9 and 10, Jesus talks to them about rising from the dead, which he had done before and would do again before the crucifixion. Why do you think it was so hard for them to accept his words?
5. Why was the crowd overwhelmed with awe when they saw Jesus?
6. In verse 23, do you think Jesus scolding the father's faith, or something else?
7. Was Jesus saying, in verse 29, that the disciples could have cast him out if they prayed?

**HEART**

1. Imagine you were Peter, James, or John. How would you have told a friend who wasn't there what you saw?
2. Note what happens in verse 9 right after the most amazing mountain-top experience ever. We often think the "good life" is all about having mountain-top experiences, but most of life is lived in the valley. What happens to Jesus in the valley and how does this compare to the ups and downs of our lives today?
3. Where does more growth happen; on the mountain-top, or the valley? Think through what this may mean to our perspective on struggle. Is struggle always a bad thing?
4. It took great humility, and honesty, for the father to admit that he struggled with unbelief. What do you think Jesus' action for the father communicates about faith to you and me?
5. Jesus had several encounters with demons. Was this just something that happened in his day? Does it still happen today? If so, what might it look like and how do you and I combat these dark forces?

**HANDS:** This week, take some time to look back over your life and reflect on some of the tougher seasons. What did you learn about yourself in those seasons? What, if anything, did you learn about God? What could you do to remind yourself, the next time struggles come, that God is still with you and not only will never leave you, but can use those moments to bring the best out of you?

**WORDS TO LIVE BY**

20... *"And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

*Matthew 28:20b, NLT*

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE: THE BEAUTIFUL UPSET

### WEEK 3 - The Greatness We Can't Grasp

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

**OPENING QUESTION:** Share with your group about a person in your life that showed you a picture of Jesus by how they lived their lives. How did that person influence how you live your life today?

#### HEAD

1. Read Mark 10:32-45, together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. It seems like every time the disciples start to think things are moving in the direction they want, Jesus reminds them what his call is...which is to die. Why do you think we find this rhythm in the gospels?
3. Clearly, the disciples don't hear Jesus' words about his death because they immediately start to ask about sitting next to him in the kingdom they thought he had come to establish. How could the disciples watch the way Jesus lived his life, and listen to the words he spoke and the things he taught, and still miss the point of God's kingdom?
4. James and John were nicknamed sons of thunder. Why do you think they were so quick to ask for the seats of honor next to Jesus?
5. James and John think they will follow Jesus anywhere, but they don't yet know what's coming. Imagine what it was like for them to see Jesus on the cross, and remember his words. Discuss.

#### HEART

1. In verse 32, it says that Jesus was walking ahead of them, which is the position of a disciple. A disciple follows. Are there ways that you and I can run ahead of Jesus? If so, how can we keep that from happening?
2. The disciples clearly struggled to let go of their egos and follow Jesus wherever he led them. How do you see egos getting in the way of Christ's work and his church today?
3. What must happen to our egos in order for us to be the kinds of disciples Jesus wants us to be...servants not masters? How and when did this happen for the disciples? How and when does it happen for us?
4. The Jews had been slaves before and they were oppressed by Rome and their local politicians as Jesus speaks now. How must it have been like for them to hear that Jesus was calling them to be servants and slaves?

**HANDS:** This week, we want to put into practice Jesus' call to be servants. Who is someone in your world that you can help out in some tangible way this week? Maybe what you do for them is anonymous, maybe you have to partner with them to make it happen, but think through how you can be a blessing. It could be at your school, your work, your neighborhood, or your church. Think of this person, or group, as if you were doing this for Jesus. Afterwards, reflect on the experience. Was it hard? Easy? How did it make you feel? What or who is next?

#### WORDS TO LIVE BY

45 *"For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Mark 10:45, NLT

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### WEEK 4 - The Entrance We Didn't See Coming

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

**OPENING QUESTION:** Have you ever met someone famous? A musician, an athlete, an actor, an author? What was it like meeting them and do you get anything out of it?

#### HEAD

1. Read Mark 11:1-25, together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. The way Jesus entered Jerusalem was definitely a fulfillment of a Messianic prophecy. It's almost as if, knowing his end was near, he was giving the religious leaders permission to do their worst. Why would he put himself out there like this for all to see...during Passover no less, when there were roughly two million Jews in Jerusalem?
3. Imagine what it was like to be in the crowd during Jesus' entry; FINALLY, the Messiah had come. After waiting 100's of years, what must this moment have been like?
4. Why do you think Jesus cursed the fig tree? Was he hangry or do you think there might be more to the story that first meets the eye?
5. Jesus had been to the temple in Jerusalem before, at least three times as recorded in the gospels, but others think he would have come yearly. Why choose now to reclaim the temple and drive out the commotion?
6. Verses 23-25 have often been used to shame people who pray for something but their prayers aren't answered because they didn't have "enough faith." What do you think Jesus is really trying to teach the disciples in this moment, about prayer?

#### HEART

1. The temple in Jesus day was a system of barriers, that started in the court where Jesus drove out the money changers. Some scholars even believe that it would have been so loud in that court, that you couldn't hear yourself think let alone pray. Knowing that this court was the only place the Gentiles were allowed to go, what else was might Jesus have been trying to communicate about our access to God?
2. What have you learned in your life about prayer that has helped you? What is still hard for you or causes you to question? What do you think God wants from our prayers?

**HANDS:** This week, try scheduling an hour of time to spend with just God, in prayer. Maybe you spend that time talking, maybe you spent it in silence, maybe you go for a walk in nature, maybe you breathe in and out the name of Jesus. However you do it, try an hour. It can be hard especially if you've never done it before, but find a quiet place and just be with God.

#### WORDS TO LIVE BY

*28 Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."*

*Matthew 11:28, NLT*

## SMALL GROUP GUIDE: THE BEAUTIFUL UPSET

### WEEK 5 - The Weight We Cannot Carry

**INTRODUCTION:** The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

**OPENING QUESTION:** Have you ever been in a place that you strongly felt the presence of God or a deep sense of holiness? Share about one of those places and why you think you felt the way you did.

#### HEAD

1. Read Mark 14:32-50, together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. Again, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John farther into this experience. Why do you think he kept singling them out from the others?
3. The disciples had likely never seen Jesus so deeply troubled and distressed. What do you think they made of it and how could they fall asleep when he was struggling?
4. When Jesus says he was "crushed with grief to the point of death," what do you think he means?
5. What do you think it would have done for Jesus' heart if he found Peter, James, and John praying even just one of the times he checked on them?
6. According to Mark 14:48-49, how else is the kingdom of God not like the empires of this world?
7. Estimates are that as many as 1,000 soldiers came to arrest Jesus. Why so many and what do you think Peter thought was going to happen when he pulled his sword?

#### HEART

1. The Garden of Gethsemane was likely a common place of retreat for prayer. Do you have a place or space that you like to pray, or that helps you to pray? What makes that place special for you?
2. Do you think the battle in the garden was just Jesus and his emotions, or was there another character in the story? How does Jesus battle and what can we learn from him about how to fight back when the enemy attacks?
3. Jesus knew how the disciples would respond when he was arrested, but imagine for a moment how it would have felt to see them all run away from him. Discuss.
4. Jesus decided in that garden to go through with the plan and to allow us humans to torture and crucify him. He decided in that garden to go through with the pain of separation from the Father and the Spirit. What does it mean to you to know he loves you that much?

**HANDS:** This week, read all three accounts of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and simply reflect on what he was willing to do in hopes to spend eternity with you. As you reflect, if you've never committed your life to him in the waters of baptism, what's stopping you from reaching out to a friend or your pastor right now? If you have, Easter is always a great time to renew your vows to Him.

#### WORDS TO LIVE BY

*9 The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed but wants everyone to repent.*

*2 Peter 3:9, NLT*

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**WEEK 6 - The Victory We Couldn't Imagine**

**INTRODUCTION**

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

**OPENING QUESTION**

What is something you used to believe that has changed or you no longer believe? Think as far back as childhood if needed. Did the change have no impact on you, some, or was it transformative in some way?

**HEAD**

1. Read Mark 15:33-Mark 15:8, together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. Why do you think darkness fell over the land while Jesus hung on the cross?
3. Read Psalm 22, where Jesus' quote in verse 34 comes from. What do you think that Psalm is ultimately about?
4. What do you think the significance is of the curtain in the temple, the very curtain that separated people from the presence of God, was torn? And not just torn, torn from top to bottom?
5. What was it about the way Jesus died that made the centurion say, "This man truly was the Son of God!"
6. Why do you think Jesus died so quickly? The Romans were experts at making a death like this last, so what happened?
7. Do you think the women believed the angels when they said that Jesus was alive? Remember, nothing like this had ever been heard of before.
8. Though Mark's account doesn't have Jesus reuniting with the women and the disciples, the other gospels do. What do you think it was like for them that first time they saw Jesus, especially after losing him just days before?

**HEART**

1. Most credible historians believe that Jesus of Nazareth actually lived, and that he was put to death by the Romans on a cross. The question is, what happened next. What do you believe and why?

**HANDS**

This week, read all the accounts of Jesus' trial, death, and resurrection (Matthew 27-28, Luke 23-24, Mark 15-16, John 19-20). Right out your reflections, insights, and how you feel the Spirit moving in your heart. Again, if you haven't before committed your life to Jesus in the waters of baptism, what's stopping you from doing it now? If you have, what would it look like to renew your commitment to him this Easter. Also, who is someone in your circle of influence that you could pray for, that they would come to know the love of God and the gift of Jesus for them.

**WORDS TO LIVE BY**

*16 For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.*

*John 3:16-17, NLT*