

II. Group discussion *Each number below includes a set of questions that relate to the scripture text. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Mark 8:14-38 aloud.

1. What do these stories tell you about the relationship between Jesus and his disciples?

Why do you suppose the healing did not work in verse 24? Was Jesus suffering a power shortage?

What’s the point of the partial healing story (22-26)? Could it be a visual parable for the disciples?

The man who can make out fuzzy shapes is like the disciples – not totally blind but way out of focus.

2. What did the apostles get right in this story? *Verse 29.*
How significant is it that they kept on following Jesus, even though they messed up so often?

What was the significance of this moment?

There was a lot of confusion about Jesus, but these guys had figured out that Jesus was the Messiah.

What did Messiah (Christ) mean to 1st-century Jews?

Messiah/Christ (same word, different languages) meant anointed one – God’s special chosen leader. For oppressed Jews, it meant God was acting once again to deliver his people from bondage.

Why did Jesus tell the disciples to keep his identity a secret?

Would you want these goofballs to be your ambassadors?

3. What did the apostles misunderstand in this passage?

16 – thought Jesus was upset because they were short on food.

32 – tried to talk Jesus out of his calling.

Why did the apostles have so much trouble understanding Jesus?

Why did Jesus call Peter “Satan” in verse 33?

4. How are we like the apostles in Mark 8? What are some things we get right? What are some ways we struggle to comprehend and cooperate with God’s will?
5. In Mark 8, it is clear that Jesus and his disciples are operating in different worlds. What were Jesus’ interests and what were the disciples’ interests?

When has God worked in surprising ways in your life? What situations appeared to be bad but turned out to be a blessing?

When have you seen others face hardships that turned out to be a blessing?

6. Why might God ignore our prayers seeking healing, prosperity and security? Should we pray for these things?

As we mature in faith, how do our prayers change?

Hopefully we see a progression from “bless & protect me” to “use me” to “your will be done.”

How would you feel if the purpose of your life was to endure years of struggle so that your grandchildren could bless the world in a profound way?

*“If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace,”
Thomas Paine (1737-1809).*

† **The big question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

Jesus tries to make it abundantly clear for the disciples in verses 34-38. What is involved in following Jesus and how do you respond to these verses?

III. Other resources

The point – Listen for God’s will in your life. He may have different plans than you do, but his plans are always right.

Prayer ideas

Pray for discernment – to know God’s will for our lives.

Pray for wisdom – to see how to honor God’s will.

Pray for strength – to carry out God’s will with all our strength.

Ask God to guide our congregation through the process of discerning whom he has prepared to preach at College Hills.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

Food relay

- Prepare two identical mystery pouches. Fill them with kid-friendly finger food (grapes, tomatoes, cereal, pretzels, crackers) in sandwich bags. For fun you might also include one messy food like a pudding cup. Be sure you will have at least one bag per kid.
- At the meeting, divide into two teams for a relay race. Place the two pouches on one end of the room, the two teams on the other. (This would be a good outside game.)
- When you say go, one person from each team races to the mystery pouch, grabs a baggie, and eats the contents. Participant must swallow entire contents of baggie before returning to team for next relay participant.
- Winning team is the first to eat all the mystery items (keep going until you’re done!).

What was difficult about that game? Who had to eat something you did not like? How is that like our lives?

Read Mark 8:27-33 aloud. In what ways did Jesus and Peter have different ideas about what it meant to be the Christ?

What did Peter do when he disagreed with Jesus about his job? How did Jesus respond? Why did he call him Satan?

How should we respond when God wants us to do something we do not like?

LIFE Group Guide

Mark 8 – Message confusion

By John Grant (jgrant@collegehills.org)

The theme: **Learning to listen for and honor God’s will for our lives.**

In Mark 8, the disciples struggle to understand Jesus. They miss the point repeatedly, even resisting him as he pursues his calling. Jesus is patient and consistent, always calling them to a reality they have not yet imagined.

This is one of those “I can relate” passages. We all face times where it seems like God is making a string of bad decisions. But like the disciples, we continue to follow even though we do not understand. And in the end, God gives us what we need each day.

Leadership tip: Recognize the important contributions of women in your group. Nearly all of them are stronger with relationships than their husbands (sorry, guys!). And God has given many of them leadership gifts. Honor the women and honor God by honoring those gifts as often as possible. We live in a culture that de-values women, and Christians should do better.

I. Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone’s spiritual pulse, and “break the ice.” No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ What was the smallest space you have lived in?
- ❖ When has God disappointed you?
- ❖ It has been said that “the hardest place to live is right where you are.” What does this quote mean? How do you respond to this thought? If you could live any other place (past, future, a friend’s life, etc.), where would you live?