

## TALKING POINTS

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### 1. RESPOND TO THE CALL

MARK 1:1-20;

2:13-17

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1.a. What do you understand by God's "calls" to us?

b. How can it relate to life in the local church, our daily work, "full-time" service?

2. How do we experience God's call?

How would you respond to someone who said, "I don't feel called to do anything particular for God."

How can we know what God wants us to do for Him?

3. What is the relationship between Christ's call to know Him as our Saviour, and His call to follow Him day by day?

4. What are Christ's objectives in 'calling' us?

What is involved in becoming 'fishers of men' (1:17)?

5. If we feel that Christ is calling us to any form of service, what steps should we take in responding to Him?

What is the present-day equivalent to the response of Simon and Andrew, James and John, and Levi (1:16-20; 2:14)?

6. What constraints does modern life (family, work, cultural and social conditions) impose on us in responding to Christ's call?

7. What preparation is necessary to equip us for Christ's service? How can we go about it?

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### 2. THE NEED FOR TRAINING

MARK 3:7-19

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1. How can we get to know Jesus better as part of our training process?
2. The message the disciples had to give was 'that people should repent' (6:12). Why is this an important emphasis? What emphasis dominates our message today? Should there be changes?
3. What training programmes are available to us? Look at what is already available in the local church set-up.  
  
If necessary, how could a programme be organised? Suggest subjects to be looked at; people who could contribute. Investigate the availability of correspondence courses and/or evening classes. (E.g., contact London Bible College, Correspondence Courses, Green Lane, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 2UW.)
4. How desirable or possible is it to take a year to two out to study at a Bible College? What advantages would this have for those continuing afterwards in secular work, as well as for people going into full-time Christian activity?
5. What impression of Jesus would the disciples have gained as they went around with Him? Look at the references under section 2.a.i-vi. How is this useful to them - and to us - as part of the training programme?
6. What authority do we have as Jesus' followers today? How is it to be used?



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### 3. LEARN TO TRUST WHEN IT'S TOUGH

MARK 4:35-41

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1. The disciples were nurtured by Jesus; they were learning basic truths - vital for future service. The need for learning runs right through the New Testament. See how Timothy nurtured new Christians in Thessalonica (1 Thess.3:2-4). What was his role - and why?

What things would you want to emphasise in teaching new followers of Jesus?

2. The experience on the Lake helped the disciples to trust Jesus in desperate situations. See how unshaken Peter and John remain in Acts 4:1-21 when the Jewish leaders let loose a storm of opposition on them. What characteristics show that they are very different from the frightened men they proved to be in the storm on the Lake? What had they learned and experienced which can be of help to us? Think about the significance of Acts 4:2,8,12,13,18-20.
3. Most of us know what it is like, as Christians, to be afraid - when we're in a dangerous situation (as the disciples were) or when people attack or ridicule us for being Christians. Share experiences which have made you afraid. What are the common fears of Christians? In what ways can they be overcome?
4. What things sometimes tempt us to doubt Jesus' care and ability to help us? How can we deal with that kind of difficulty?
5. If Jesus is able to rescue us at all times, why does He sometimes allow His followers to be involved in tragic accidents or even martyrdom?
6. We've seen how Jesus encouraged His disciples (section 3 on the outline). Share how Jesus has encouraged you or someone you know of to go on trusting Him.

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### 4. GET OUT THE GOOD NEWS

MARK 6:1-13

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1. Jesus can use us as witnesses on our own - at work, in our families, etc., but why is it often better to be part of a team?

Discuss the possibility of setting up outreach teams in your own group or church.

2. What evidence is there of Jesus' authority in our outreach to non-believers nowadays? What is it that makes people repent and believe in Jesus?

What part do prayer, obedience, the Holy Spirit, faith, God's Word, etc., have in the whole process?

What can make us ineffective?

3. What life style today is helpful in getting the good news about Jesus across to those among whom we live and work? What in us can attract people to Jesus, and what can put them off?

4. In our outreach how can we recognise when it's time to give up pursuing certain contacts - and when we should continue.

'Shaking the dust of your feet' was a powerful visual aid for those who were rejecting Christ. What might be today's equivalent, and what would be its purpose?

5. Share information about those who have responded or are responding positively to the good news, (also share news of those who are rejecting), and spend some time in prayer together for these individuals.

6. How would you respond to someone who said, "I'm giving up witnessing. Nothing positive seems to happen when I try."?



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### 5. IT COSTS TO FOLLOW JESUS

MARK 6:14-29

(1:4-8)

1. Discuss the pressures you face to tone down your witness.

What people or circumstances are there which have this effect on you?

What elements of the Christian message are you tempted to soft-pedal?

How can these situations be remedied?

2. We don't wish needlessly to offend people. But in attempting to avoid offence what elements of the Christian message are we likely to emphasise or ignore?

3. How would you react to the charge: 'Christians are hypocrites; loads of talk, but their lives don't back it up.'?

Is the charge justified? What weaknesses do critics have in mind? What things would they really like to see in Christian's lives? What do you feel would make a positive impact?

4. Look up Luke 1:15b; Matt.3:7,8; Matt.11:2-6; 11:11a. What picture of John the Baptist do you get?

Which of his characteristics would you value for yourself?

5. Read Mark 8:34,35 and Rev.2:10. Death has often been the ultimate penalty for following Jesus. In what areas or circumstances is this still so? Try to research some facts.

What use will you put them to?

What do these verses say to most of us in western society?

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### 6. LEARN HOW TO CARE

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MARK 6:30-44

(8:1-10)

1. In what areas of life does selfishness frequently surface in our western world? Think about the influence of the advertising media, a consumer oriented society, the emphasis on acquiring things: money, luxuries, etc.

What is its effect on society?

2. Why is selfishness fundamentally un-christian? Note the significance of 'selfish ambition' being included in the 'acts of the sinful nature' (Gal.5:19-21). What other characteristics in these verses are tinged with selfishness? A related word 'greed', figures in Col.3:5,6. What does Paul say that the Christian's attitude is to be?

3. Unselfishness is written right across Jesus' life. Go through the typical day with Jesus in Mark 1:21-39 to see how He unselfishly gave His time and energy. Mark 10:45 sums it up.

In what aspects of life is Jesus' attitude a guide for us? Note situations at work, at home and in church life where unselfishness is needed.

4. Draw up a list of people in your church or among your contacts who need help. Identify their needs and plan practical ways of meeting them.
5. Often in a church the task of 'caring' falls on just a few shoulders. Note who these people are and see if there are ways in which their caring roles might be shared.

Often pastors, elders and deacons find themselves faced with more needs than they can readily cope with - and many of their counselling roles are confidential, and can't be shared. Are there tasks that they could delegate? Take steps to find out.

What measures can be taken to ensure that they get the breaks and rest that they need?

6. Information: seminars and courses on various aspects of caring are run by Care and Counsel, St. Mary Magdalene Church, Holloway Road, London N7 8LT. Tel. 01 609 4545. Brochures are available on request.



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### 7. GETTING TO KNOW JESUS BETTER

MARK 8:27-9:13

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1. In practical terms how do we get to know someone? What's involved? How long does it take? If possible, share experiences.
2. How do we get to know Jesus? What's involved? How long does it take? What are the similarities to getting to know the people we've just referred to? What are the differences?
3. What, for you, makes Jesus an amazing person?
4. Following Jesus sometimes led to martyrdom for the early Christians. Read 8:34-38 again. What do they mean for us in modern Britain? What for us do the following phrases imply:
  - a. 'He must deny himself' (34)?
  - b. 'take up his cross and follow me' (34)?
  - c. How can one 'lose his life' for Jesus and His message and yet 'save it' (35)?
  - d. Why is one's 'soul' or 'life' more important than 'gaining the whole world' (36)?
5. How would you respond to someone who said, 'I don't see why I should be prepared to die for Jesus'?
6. Common ideas about the Christ or the Messiah were that He would reign as a victorious King over Israel, defeating the Romans and all Israel's enemies. What kind of Messiah did Jesus show Himself to be? See 8:31. Why was this a vital part of His calling and mission? How does Isaiah 53:3-12 help us to understand this?
7. What do we discover about Jesus from the transfiguration (9:2-10)?

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### 8. LEARNING TO PRAY

MARK 9:14-32

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1. How would you describe what prayer is? Think about it's various facets and characteristics. Take Philippians 4:6 as a starting point.
2. Why is faith important when we pray? What does the incident in Matthew 9:27-31 indicate? What can we learn from Mark 2:1-5?
3. Obviously, faith is not the only factor governing whether or not our prayers will be answered. Look again at the three points made under the second section on the outline.
  - a. What wrong motives can influence our praying?
  - b. Why should wrong attitudes or sin in our lives block our prayers?
  - c. We know that it's important to pray in line with God's will for us. How can we set about discovering or recognising God's will?
4. Read the 'Lord's Prayer' in Matthew 6:9-13. What guidelines for praying does this set out for us?
5. Many of us find that praying isn't easy. What things make it difficult? Try to suggest ways in which our prayer times could be improved.
6. Share details of prayers which weren't or haven't yet been answered (remembering that 'No' can be a definite and right answer). Try to think through reasons for delay in God's answering your request.

Share, too, answers to prayers. What have you learned from them?



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### 9. LEARNING TO SERVE

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MARK 9:33-37

10:32-45

1. Why do we like being served or waited on? What is particularly pleasant or satisfying? What does that teach us about ourselves?
2. Why, do you think, did the disciples argue about who was the greatest (9:34) and why did James and John want to be important (10:37)? There seems to be nothing wrong inherently in being the leader or the boss. So what was the trap, weakness or temptation that they were liable to fall into? What do Christian leaders have to guard against in their own attitudes and actions? Think also about 10:42.
3. What is the primary quality of leadership or greatness that Jesus is emphasising (10:43,44)? Why is it important? In practice, how can this be worked out by a) church leaders (elders, deacons, pastors, etc.); b) Christians in positions of responsibility at work?  
  
Give practical examples.
4. Read together Is.53:4-6,12 and Philippians 2:6-11.  
  
What mental pictures of Jesus do these verses create for you?  
  
Why did Paul write the Philippian passage? See 2:5.  
So, what qualities for serving can we discover here?
5. Jesus' service meant that He served - gave His life - for those who hated Him, for everyone without distinction (Mark 10:45; Rom.5:6,8,10). Think of some of the people you know - maybe hostile, indifferent, opposed. How can you make Christ's love real to them?

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### 10. COUNTING THE COST

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MARK 10:17-31

13:9-13

14:2-31,

66-72

1. How would you describe what it means to follow Jesus? For example, is it always a joy? What is it?

2. What have you experienced which makes following Jesus tough at times?

Try recalling experiences of those who have come to Christ from Islam and Hinduism. Get hold of the book "I dare to call Him Father" by Bilquis Sheikh (Kingsway).

How about those who have come to Christ in this country from non-Christian or nominally Christian families?

What encouragement does Mark 13:9-11 give?

3. If the ultimate opposition is not from people but the devil, what attitude does that enable us to take to hostile people? And how can we tackle the devil? Think about Ephesians 6:10-18, and the guidance it gives.
4. Remember Peter's experience of letting Jesus down, and then being restored (Mark 14:29,30,66-72; John 21:15-19). Share any experiences you may have had of failing Jesus. What was involved in coming back and going on with the Lord Jesus?
5. One of the sub-headings on the outline states: 'Jesus gives the only life worth living' (8:34-37) - see John 10:10. Think about what this involves and how you would answer someone who said, 'Being a Christian is a drag. I get a real kick out of life. Come away with us for the weekend, and you'll really find out what life is about: anything goes. It's fantastic!'



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### 11. LEARNING INTEGRITY

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MARK 12:13-17;  
28-34;  
38-44

1. How would you define integrity?
2. Who in our reading from Mark 12 are people of integrity, and who are without integrity?  
  
How do you tell them apart? What makes the difference?
3. Why is integrity especially needed today?  
  
How is our integrity challenged? Think about common practices in business, commerce and in office life which are affected. Are there other spheres of activity where problems exist?
4. How is the first commandment, quoted in v.30, related to 'giving to God what is God's'?  
  
How was the poor widow conforming to this command (41-44)? Obviously, God is not expecting that all of us should put our entire income or financial resources into the church offering bag. But how does God want us to handle our money and possessions? Extend the discussion to the use of time, abilities, etc.  
  
What are some of the implications - in terms of the practical effect on our lives - of loving God totally? Also, in this connection think about the implications of 1 Cor.10:31; Col.3:23-25.
5. Read Eph.4:25-32. How do these instructions first, relate to being a person of integrity and second, help toward fulfilling the second commandment (Mark 12:31)?
6. What happens if the principles of 'giving to Caesar what is Caesar's' and 'giving to God what is God's' come into conflict? Note the situation in Acts 5:27-29. What situations today can you envisage where this dilemma might be faced. How would you in practice resolve them?

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### 12. LEARNING ABOUT PERSONAL WEAKNESSES

MARK 14:43-72

1. What do you feel are the main reasons why someone who makes a profession of faith in Jesus Christ goes back? Mark 4:13-19 points to some of the factors involved. Discuss how these factors affect people today. Try thinking of specific examples.

What other problem areas exist, not referred to in these verses? Think through the issues raised in the outline under 1.c.

2. Because of the above factors it is necessary to nurture those who make decisions to follow Jesus. So we had nurture or discovery groups after Mission '89.

What are the main matters to concentrate on in such groups? See how Timothy set about helping the new Thessalonian Christians (1 Thessalonians 3:1-5). Itemise what he did, and why. What issues do you think are especially important to cover nowadays a. For young people; b. For young married couples and families; c. For older people?

3. What prejudices do people have today about the Christian faith and Christians, which become reasons for refusing to think seriously about commitment to Christ?

First, list those prejudices/objections and then discuss how you would try to resolve the problems raised.

4. What are the common reasons for Christians not telling their colleagues at work that they belong to Christ. What advice would you give someone who found him or herself in this position? Itemise the problems and suggest ways of dealing with them.

5. How would you seek to help someone who said, 'I've let Jesus down again and again when I've been scared to speak up for Him. I think I've blown it and He's given up on me'? Think of the way in which Jesus helped Peter (John 21:15-22), and the general principles of 1 John 1:9; John 5:24; 10:28,29.

6. There are other areas of personal weakness where Christians get involved in sexual immorality, drugs - or disobedience of any kind. How would you help to bring them back to a right relationship with the Lord Jesus?



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### 13. LEARNING THAT JESUS IS ALIVE

MARK 16:1-20

1. Why do we need a Saviour who, not only dies as a sacrifice for sin, but raises again? Think about the significance of 1 Cor.15:17.
2. What does the fact that Jesus is alive mean to you?
3. How would you reply to someone who said: 'I can't see why it's important that Jesus should have risen from the dead. He was a good man wasn't He? Even though He was martyred He left us a good example and some wonderful teaching to follow. Surely that's enough.'?
4. A former Chief Justice of England, Lord Darling, once said: "In its favour as a living truth, there exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world can fail to bring a verdict that the resurrection is true."

Starting with Acts 2:32 and 1 Cor.15:3-8, seek to compile evidence that Jesus is alive.

Books that help: "Who Moved the Stone" by Frank Morison; "The Day Death Died" by Michael Green, IVP; "The Resurrection - Fact or Fiction" by Richard Bewes, Lion.

5. Read John 16:20-22 and John 20:19-21.

Why does the resurrection of Jesus bring peace and joy?

6. What encouragement do we receive from Jesus' command and promise after the resurrection in Matt.28:18-20? See also Mark 16:20; Heb.13:5-6.