

## Recognizing God's Call

Mark 4:21-35

Small Group Notes

### INTRODUCTION

In Mark 4:21-34, Jesus uses parables that teach about the nature of the Kingdom of God. Much of the work of the kingdom of God flies under the radar of the attention of the world's pursuit of strength, power, wealth, and self-glory. Even the disciples don't fully understand the nature of the Kingdom of God until after the death and resurrection of Jesus. We should not despise or be discouraged at the apparent hiddenness of the kingdom of God. God is at work to redeem his lost children and restore all that is broken in His creation. The day is coming when he will make all things new, and he invites everyone who will receive him to experience that new life, salvation, and restoration even now.

**Main Idea:** *Be Encouraged, God is at work, but not always in the ways we can see. We must position our hearts to listen to him, recognize the call, and trust him to do his work in us and through us.*

**Opening Question:** *Have the group share how they practice listening to God. What have they found helpful that they would like to share with the group?*

**Read:** Mark 4:21-34

### DIG AND DISCOVER

Pastor Mark shared three actions we can take to listen to God and follow his call on our lives.

**Respond fully to God's grace (4:21-25).** Although the kingdom of God comes in ways that we least expect, God intends for his work to be seen as a lamp that lights a room. The key for us

to experience God's work through us is first about the posture of our hearts and the desire to respond fully to God's grace. God gives his prevenient grace to all people (Titus 2:11), but we are responsible for our response to that grace. Those who respond fully in faith to his grace, receive more grace. Those who respond to his grace with closed hands and hardened hearts lose what little they have.

Discuss the quote, "When the Student is ready, the teacher will appear." One who is humble and eager to learn will grow, but one who is not teachable is unable to grow. The posture of our heart matters.

**Place the Growth in God's Hands (4:26-29).** The kingdom of God cannot be grown by human initiative or ability. The growth of the kingdom belongs to God alone. Just as the farmer in the parable, we are called to sow the seed of the Gospel in the lives of others, but we recognize that the growth and harvest comes from God. This is great encouragement for God's call on us to make disciples. We have a calling, but we also have confidence that God is the one who will change lives and grow his kingdom. We are called to seek the Kingdom (Matthew 6:33) and we pray daily for the kingdom to come, but we have confidence that God is the one who redeems broken lives and will restore all of creation.

Alistair Begg, shared that the surprising secret to fruitful ministry in the lives of others can be summed up in one word, "Inadequacy." *Do you really believe that God can work through your inadequacy in sharing the Gospel in the lives of others? Do you really believe that as we do our part, God is the one who will grow his kingdom?*

**Embrace Small Beginning (4:30-34).** The kingdom of God does not come with flashing lights, glitter, and trumpets. It comes through, under the radar of the attention of the world. Jesus compares the kingdom of God with a mustard seed, one of the smallest seeds that is about the size of the period at the

end of this sentence. When it grows it grows to a bush that is 10 to 12 feet tall. Paul in Corinthians reminds us that God uses the things of this world that are weak and insignificant so that no one may boast except for in Christ. Most looked down on Jesus and those who followed him, but the Kingdom of God grows from its small beginnings to the formation of the church, the spread of the Gospel through the world, and ultimately will culminate in the restoration of all things when Jesus returns.

It can be easy for us to overlook small beginnings. In many ways the church in the West has embraced and chased the spotlight, perhaps to the neglect of the small beginnings that God call us to in our lives and the lives of others. Many of us struggle with God's call to make disciples because of our inadequacy or fear.

*What small step might God be calling you to take? Do you have any stories of how you have seen God bless a small beginning in your life or in the church?*

### **CLOSING**

Is there any specific way that God is speaking to you through His word this week? How can we pray for each other this week? Is there a small step of obedience that you would like to take?