

The Gospel of Mark, Teacher's Guide

Week 11: Seeing Jesus Clearly

Mark 8:1–30

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

Mark 8:1–30 is the structural center of the Gospel. The first half of Mark has been a relentless unveiling of who Jesus is through His mighty works. The second half will turn decisively toward the cross. The pivot point is Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi: "You are the Christ." Doctrinally, this lesson must handle several large themes. The continuing compassion and sufficiency of Christ for His people. The difference between honest faith and sign-demanding unbelief. The dangerous leavens of religious hypocrisy and worldly compromise. The reality that even genuine disciples can have hardened, dulled perception. And, most importantly, the central confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, around which the entire Christian faith is built (Matthew 16:13–19; Romans 10:9–10; John 20:30–31).

At the same time, the chapter is one of the most formationally probing in the Gospel. Mark uses the two-stage healing of the blind man as a parable in action. He places it directly between the disciples' dullness in the boat and Peter's great confession. The Twelve, like the man at Bethsaida, see partially. They will see clearly only after Jesus lays His hands on them again, after the cross, after the resurrection, after Pentecost. Long-time disciples in your class are at the same place. They have the right answers about Jesus. They are walking with Him. But their sight is still partial. They need the second touch. The lesson should not let them slip out of the room with the comfortable assumption that having the right answer is the same as seeing clearly.

Finally, build the whole lesson around Peter's confession. The great central question of the Gospel of Mark is, "Who do you say that I am?" Every other doctrinal and formational thread in this chapter is preparation for that question. Help your students hear it personally. Have them rehearse the New Testament confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 16:16; John 20:31; Acts 8:37 in the Majority Text and footnote; Romans 10:9–10; 1 John 4:15), and let them connect this confession back to their own response to the gospel in baptism (Acts 22:16) and forward to a life that actually confesses Christ in the way it is lived.

Question 1

Student Question:

In Mark 8:2 Jesus says, "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat." He goes on to feed four thousand from seven loaves and a few small fish (8:6–9). What is Mark teaching, by giving us a second feeding miracle, about the steady compassion of Christ and about His sufficiency to provide for needs we have brought to Him before?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The second feeding miracle is sometimes treated as a duplicate of the first. Mark is doing something different. He gives us two feedings deliberately, in two different geographic contexts, with two different numbers, with two different basket counts, both pointing the same direction. The compassion of Christ that fed five thousand in chapter 6 is the same compassion that feeds four thousand in chapter 8. The provision He gave then He gives again. He has not changed.

Mark's wording in 8:2 is striking. "I have compassion on the crowd." The Greek word ('splanchnizomai') is intensely physical, the kind of feeling that grips a person in the gut. Christ does not look at hungry, tired people and triage. He does not roll His eyes at being interrupted. He feels their hunger before they have spoken it. "Yet not one of them is forgotten before God" (Luke 12:6) is not a slogan. It is the steady disposition of Jesus toward His people.

There is also a quiet teaching here about the sufficiency of Christ even when the situation looks more than what we have. Seven loaves and a few small fish would have been a small dinner for a family. Christ takes what they have, gives thanks, breaks it, and hands it to the disciples to distribute. Four thousand are fed with leftovers to spare. Once again, the math does not matter. What matters is whose hands the bread is in.

For students this scene reinforces what was already taught in chapter 6. The Lord is still in the business of multiplying what we hand Him. He is still moved by hunger. He is still able to feed His people in desolate places. We are not asked to be the source. We are asked to bring what we have, trust His compassion, and let Him work.

This also has clear application to the Lord's table. The same fourfold pattern is woven through both feedings (took, gave thanks, broke, gave). The same Christ feeds the church each first day of the week at His table. The reminder that He is moved with compassion for tired, hungry people is exactly what we need to receive every Sunday as we hold the bread and the cup.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The continuing, undiminished compassion of Christ for His people (Hebrews 13:8; Matthew 9:36)
- Christ's sufficiency in seasons of repeated need, not only first need (2 Corinthians 9:8; Philippians 4:19)
- The pattern of "took, gave thanks, broke, gave" as foreshadowing of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)
- The Lord's Supper as the church's weekly meal with the compassionate Christ (Acts 20:7)
- Faithful offering of what we have, however small, as the way Christ multiplies for others (1 Corinthians 4:1–2)
- The danger of forgetting past mercies and treating each new need as if Christ had never helped before

Discussion Prompts

- Why does Mark give us a second feeding instead of just one?
- How does Christ's compassion toward the four thousand encourage you about your own ongoing needs?
- How does the "took, gave thanks, broke, gave" pattern shape your reception of the Lord's Supper this Sunday?

Question 2

Student Question:

Like the disciples, we often forget what Christ has already done in our lives. What specific provision, deliverance, or kindness has the Lord shown you in the past that you have been slow to remember, and how could deliberate remembering shape the way you trust Him in the situation you are facing now?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Forgetting is one of the most dangerous spiritual habits, and Mark 8 will press it heavily in the boat scene that follows. The Lord has fed us before. He has spoken to us before. He has carried us before. The trial we are in today is rarely the first time we have needed His help. We tend to act as if it were.

Help students get specific. The deliverance you have already received. The prayer that was answered, perhaps not the way you expected, but answered. The relationship He restored. The shame He released. The fear He quieted. The provision that came when there was no way you could see it coming. The companionship He gave when you were sure you were alone. Most disciples can name several such moments if they are willing to look back honestly.

Deliberate remembering is a spiritual practice. Israel was commanded to do it through festivals, memorial stones, retellings around the table, sabbaths, and psalms. The New Testament continues the pattern through the Lord's Supper, the assembly of the saints, the singing of the church, testimony, and the steady reading of Scripture. Forgetting is the soil in which hardness of heart grows (Mark 8:18). Remembering is one of the chief ways God keeps the heart soft.

Encourage students to start a simple practice this week. Each evening, name one specific way the Lord has been faithful to them in the past that is relevant to today's burden. Each Sunday, come to the Lord's table with a clear memory of one thing He has already done. Keep a journal, even a brief one, that captures what He has done so the memory does not slip away with the years.

The lesson is not nostalgia. It is theology. The God who fed us before is the God who is feeding us now. The Christ whose compassion was steady then is the same Christ whose compassion is steady today. Remembering is one of the ways faith stays alive.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Deliberate remembering as a biblical discipline (Deuteronomy 8:2; Psalm 77:11–12; Psalm 103:1–5)
- Forgetfulness as a chief enemy of faith (Deuteronomy 8:11–18; Psalm 78)
- The Lord's Supper as a regular, communal act of remembrance (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)
- Testimony among brothers and sisters as a means of strengthening faith (Revelation 12:11)
- God's past faithfulness as the foundation for present trust (Lamentations 3:21–24)

Discussion Prompts

- What is one specific past mercy you tend to forget when new trouble comes?
- What practice helps you remember what the Lord has done?
- How does our class help one another remember God's past faithfulness in our lives?

Question 3

Student Question:

In verses 11–13 the Pharisees come and ask Jesus for a sign from heaven, “to test him.” He sighs deeply in His spirit and refuses, saying, “No sign will be given to this generation” (8:12). What is Jesus teaching about the difference between honest seeking and sign-demanding unbelief, and why does He refuse to feed a heart that is not really willing to hear?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The Pharisees come “to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him” (8:11). Mark says that Jesus “sighed deeply in his spirit” before refusing. The sigh is not impatience. It is grief. He has just fed four thousand. The sign has been given again and again. The Pharisees are not really asking for a sign. They are asking for an excuse.

There is a critical difference between honest seeking and sign-demanding unbelief. Honest seeking takes seriously what God has already said and shown, asks questions in good faith, and is willing to follow the answer wherever it leads. Sign-demanding unbelief sets conditions on God. “Show me this, do that, prove this in the way I specify, and then I will believe.” Underneath the demand is a heart that has already decided not to believe.

Jesus refuses to feed sign-demanding unbelief. This is consistent across the Gospels. He does not perform on demand for Herod (Luke 23:8–9). He does not give the Pharisees and Sadducees the sign they ask for (Matthew 16:1–4). He gives only “the sign of Jonah” (Matthew 12:39–40), referring to His own death, burial, and resurrection. The supreme sign God gave the world is the empty tomb of Jesus Christ. Anyone who will not believe on the basis of that sign will not believe on the basis of any other.

For Christians today this teaching matters in several ways. First, it sobers us about the kind of demands we sometimes make of God. “If You would just heal this, restore that, fix the other, then I would trust You.” Such demands are usually unbelief in disguise. Second, it relieves us of feeling that we have to perform additional spiritual miracles for skeptical hearers. The greatest sign has already been given. We point people to the resurrection, the Word, and the gathered, witnessing church. Third, it calls us to honest faith. The faith God receives is the faith that walks by what He has already said and shown, not by additional proofs we have demanded.

Help students examine whether they are asking honestly or demanding signs. The diagnostic question is, “Will I trust Christ on the basis of what He has already given, or only if He gives me something more?” The answer locates the heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The sufficiency of what God has already revealed for faith (Romans 10:17; Luke 16:31)
- The resurrection of Christ as the supreme sign for faith (Matthew 12:39–40; 1 Corinthians 15:1–11)
- The difference between honest seeking and unbelief disguised as inquiry
- The danger of setting conditions on God as a posture of the unrenewed heart
- The role of the gathered, witnessing church as a continuing testimony to the risen Christ (Acts 4:33; Acts 17:2–3)

Discussion Prompts

- What is the difference between honest seeking and sign-demanding unbelief?
- Why is the resurrection the “sign of Jonah” that is sufficient for faith?
- Where do you see sign-demanding unbelief at work today, in our culture or in our own hearts?

Question 4

Student Question:

Where in your life have you been quietly setting conditions on God (“If you would just do this, then I would believe you about that”) instead of trusting what He has already said and shown, and what would it look like to lay those conditions down this week and walk by faith in what He has already revealed?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Many believers carry quiet conditions in their hearts that they have never spoken aloud, even to themselves. “If you would restore my marriage, then I would really trust you.” “If you would heal this body, then I would serve you wholeheartedly.” “If you would change my child, then I would believe.” “If you would let me into that career, then I would give you everything.” None of these is wrong as a prayer. They become a problem when they become conditions.

Faith does not work by conditions. Faith walks with God on the basis of who He is and what He has already said. The Hebrews 11 heroes did not all receive what they had hoped to see. They walked with God anyway. “These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar” (Hebrews 11:13). Their faith was not deferred until the conditions were met. Their faith was their daily walking with the God who had already spoken.

For students, this question is meant to surface the specific condition each one is carrying. Be honest. Where is the “if you would just” in your heart? What thought keeps your faith on hold? Once it is named, the corrective is straightforward. Lay the condition down. Take the next step of obedience without waiting for the sign. Trust the God who has already given His Son, His Word, His Spirit, and His church, regardless of whether He grants this particular request the way you have hoped.

This is not denial of the desire. We can still pray fervently for what we long for. But we walk in obedience whether or not the answer comes the way we asked. “Not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39) is not a fallback prayer. It is the heartbeat of mature faith.

Encourage students to identify the specific condition and the specific next step. The lesson should not end with the condition still untouched.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith that walks with God on the basis of His character and Word, not conditions (Hebrews 11)
- The example of Christ in Gethsemane: “Not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36)
- The faithfulness of God even when our specific requests are not granted the way we asked (2 Corinthians 12:7–10)
- The danger of suspending obedience until conditions are met
- Trust in God’s timing and methods as a mark of mature discipleship

Discussion Prompts

- What hidden “if you would just” are you carrying in your heart toward God?
- What would it look like to lay that condition down this week and walk by faith anyway?
- How does the example of Christ in Gethsemane shape the way we pray about our deepest longings?

Question 5

Student Question:

Jesus warns the disciples, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod” (8:15). The disciples think He is talking about literal bread. What is Jesus actually warning

against (compare Matthew 16:11–12; Luke 12:1), what is the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod, and how do those two errors still threaten the church and the believer today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Jesus warns the disciples on the boat, “Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod” (8:15). Matthew’s parallel adds clarification: He was warning of “the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:12). Luke describes the leaven of the Pharisees as “hypocrisy” (Luke 12:1). Leaven is yeast. A small amount, hidden in dough, eventually leavens the whole batch. The image is of a small corruption that, untended, spreads through everything.

The leaven of the Pharisees is religious externalism and hypocrisy. It is the small, persistent practice of caring more about how things look than about how they are. It produces religious people whose exterior is polished and whose interior is far from God (Isaiah 29:13). It teaches doctrines that are really “commandments of men” and binds traditions on the conscience that God has not bound (Mark 7:7–8). It is dangerous precisely because it looks devout.

The leaven of Herod is worldly compromise. It is the slow surrender of moral conviction for the sake of comfort, position, popularity, or power. Herod knew John the Baptist was a righteous and holy man, and he liked to hear him preach (Mark 6:20), but when the price of obedience to truth was the embarrassment of breaking an oath at a feast, he chose comfort over truth and beheaded the man he had been protecting. Herod-leaven shows up in the believer who knows what is right but routinely chooses what is convenient. It is dangerous precisely because it is not flagrantly evil; it is gradually corrupt.

Both leavens still threaten the church today. The Pharisee-leaven shows up in congregations that have a tradition of being right and have lost the heart of being holy. It shows up in individuals whose Christian identity has become a costume, not a transformation. The Herod-leaven shows up in believers who have softened or silenced biblical conviction to keep peace at work, at the holiday table, in a political moment, or in a friendship. It shows up in churches that have quietly adjusted the New Testament to fit cultural pressure.

For students, the warning is sober. Both leavens grow quietly. Neither is loud. By the time they are obvious, the dough is already affected. The corrective is vigilance. Honest self-examination. Faithful exposure to the Word. Mutual exhortation among brothers and sisters. The means of grace by which God keeps His people from drifting in either direction.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The danger of religious hypocrisy and externalism (Matthew 23:25–28; Isaiah 29:13)
- The danger of worldly compromise and the love of comfort, position, and power (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17)

- The Word of God as the standard against which all teaching and practice is tested (Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 3:16–17)
- The role of the local congregation in mutual vigilance (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24–25)
- Holiness as both inner and outer, both private and public (1 Peter 1:14–16)
- The need for ongoing repentance from both subtle hypocrisy and subtle worldliness

Discussion Prompts

- What is the leaven of the Pharisees as it shows up in religious life today?
- What is the leaven of Herod as it shows up in believers under cultural pressure?
- Why are both leavens dangerous in proportion to how quiet they are?

Question 6

Student Question:

Pharisee-leaven (religious hypocrisy and externalism) and Herod-leaven (worldly compromise and the love of comfort, position, and power) usually grow quietly. Which of these two leavens is more likely to be working in your own life right now, and what is the small, specific cup of dough you need to throw out before it spreads further?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Most students will recognize themselves more in one of the two leavens than the other, depending on temperament and life setting. People with strong religious backgrounds are often more vulnerable to Pharisee-leaven. People in highly secular workplaces or culturally pressured situations are often more vulnerable to Herod-leaven. Some carry a strange mixture of both, hypocritical at church and compromising at work.

Help students identify which is more likely to be operating in their lives right now. The Pharisee in us looks like quiet pride in being right, harsh judgment of those who differ on minor matters, attention to appearance and reputation, anxiety about how things look, and the slow drift toward valuing being respected as a Christian over being shaped as one. The Herod in us looks like silence in conversations where truth should be spoken, gradual adjustment of conviction to keep peace, prioritizing career over conscience, and the slow drift toward valuing comfort over costly faithfulness.

The “cup of dough” is the small concrete thing the Lord is asking each student to throw out before it spreads further. A specific habit of self-display in religious settings. A specific habit of silence where speech is required. A specific tradition we have been defending more than we are defending Scripture. A specific compromise we have made with the world. The size of the act is not the measure of its importance. Small starting points spread.

Encourage one act of repentance this week. Speak the silence. Confess the show. Test the tradition. Reverse the small compromise. The corrective for leaven is not more leaven of the opposite kind; it is the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8).

Mutual encouragement matters here. A trusted brother or sister can usually see the leaven in us before we can. Help students think of one person in their lives they could invite to speak honestly with them about both possible leavens.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The leaven of malice and evil contrasted with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:6–8)
- Repentance as both turning from sin and walking in concrete obedience (Acts 26:20; James 1:22–25)
- The role of trusted brothers and sisters in honest self-examination (Galatians 6:1–2; James 5:16)
- The slow nature of subtle sin and the urgency of small, early correction
- Sanctification as the ongoing repentance of small drifts in both directions

Discussion Prompts

- Which leaven is more active in your life right now?
- What is the small cup of dough you need to throw out this week?
- Who could you ask to speak honestly with you about the leaven they see?

Question 7

Student Question:

In verses 17–21 Jesus asks the disciples a string of urgent questions: “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?” What is Christ teaching about the kind of heart problem that disciples can have even after long exposure to Him, and how does this connect to the warning of Mark 4:24, Hebrews 3:7–15, and 2 Peter 1:5–11?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Mark 8:17–21 is a sobering string of questions from Jesus to the Twelve. “Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember?” The questions echo Israel’s wilderness rebuke (Deuteronomy 29:4; Jeremiah 5:21) and Isaiah’s call to a people whose ears were dull (Isaiah 6:9–10).

What Jesus is naming in the disciples is not active rebellion. It is dullness. They have eaten the bread He multiplied. They have watched the demons obey His word. They have heard the parables, including the parable of the soils. They have witnessed the deliverance of the demoniac, the healing of the woman, the raising of the little girl, the walking on water, the second feeding. And they are arguing in the boat about forgotten bread. Their perception of Christ has not caught up to His self-disclosure.

This is one of the most important warnings in the New Testament for long-term, faithful, active disciples. We are exactly the ones whose hearts are most at risk of slow erosion of perception. We can attend, give, serve, teach, and assemble, and our actual sight of Christ can quietly thin out across the years. Hebrews picks up the same warning. “Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today,’ that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12–13). 2 Peter 1:5–11 lists the qualities believers must “make every effort” to add to their faith, warning that “whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins” (1:9).

The cure is the same the Lord prescribed for Israel. Remember. Listen. Look at what God has actually done. Reorient the heart through the Word, the Lord’s Supper, the assembly, prayer, deliberate testimony, and mutual exhortation. The Pharisee never sees clearly because pride blocks the view. The dull-hearted disciple does not see clearly because attention has drifted. Both can be reawakened, but only by deliberate return to the means God has appointed.

Help students take this warning seriously without despair. Christ does not ask the Twelve these questions to drive them away. He asks them to drive them back to attentive sight. He is doing the same thing with us when we read this passage today. The questions are an invitation, not a dismissal.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The progressive nature of hardness and dullness even in genuine disciples (Hebrews 3:7–15)
- Forgetfulness of past mercies as a chief cause of spiritual dullness (Deuteronomy 8:11–18; 2 Peter 1:9)
- The biblical pattern of self-examination and active growth (2 Peter 1:5–11; 2 Corinthians 13:5)
- The means of grace as channels by which God renews dull hearts (the Word, the Lord’s Supper, prayer, the assembly)
- The role of brothers and sisters in mutual exhortation against drift (Hebrews 3:13; 10:24–25)
- Repentance and renewed attention as the proper response to Christ’s probing questions

Discussion Prompts

- Why is dullness so dangerous in long-term disciples?
- What specific practice helps you keep fresh perception of Christ?

- How can our class help one another against the slow drift of dullness?

Question 8

Student Question:

Long-time believers can experience an erosion of fresh perception of Christ even while remaining faithful in outward practice. Where in your own walk has your perception of Christ gone dull, and what specific spiritual practice has the Lord been quietly inviting you back into to restore your sight?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Most long-term Christians have an honest version of this question to answer. The Word that once stirred us has begun to read like familiar furniture. The Lord's Supper has become a routine to perform rather than an encounter to enter. The songs we have sung for decades have lost their edge. Prayer has thinned out into language without listening. None of these is a sign of apostasy. They are signs of dullness. They are common. They are also reversible.

Help students name where their perception has gone dull. Then help them identify the specific practice the Lord has been inviting them back into. For some it is unhurried Bible reading. For some it is the recovery of a prayer rhythm that has slipped. For some it is the deliberate use of the Lord's Supper as a real meeting with Christ each Sunday rather than a passive rite. For some it is participation in a class or small group they have been avoiding. For some it is honest confession of a sin that has been quietly muting the Spirit's voice. For some it is putting Scripture on the wall, in the car, on the phone, in the morning, until the Word can do its work again.

The corrective is not to manufacture feeling. It is to put ourselves back in front of Christ through the means He has appointed and to let Him do what only He can do. The seed of the Word is still living. The Spirit still moves. The means of grace still work. Dull eyes can see again. Dull hearts can be softened again. The disciples in Mark 8 will eventually see clearly, but only after the cross, the resurrection, Pentecost, and many touches.

For students, this question often surfaces a quiet conviction the Lord has been pressing for a while. The lesson should be the moment that conviction turns into a concrete step. Encourage one specific practice to begin this week. Small, sustainable, daily. The lesson is not finished until the practice has been chosen.

The point is not to feel guilty for being dull. The point is to come back. Christ stands ready to lay His hands on us a second time. He never refuses a disciple who comes to Him for renewed sight.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The reversibility of spiritual dullness through repentance and renewed attention

- The ongoing work of the Spirit through the means of grace (John 14:26; 2 Corinthians 3:18)
- Daily faithfulness in small practices as the ordinary way Christ keeps His people in clear sight
- Christ's readiness to give the "second touch" to disciples whose vision has gone blurry
- The danger of waiting to "feel like it" before returning to the means by which God restores

Discussion Prompts

- What practice has the Lord been quietly inviting you back into?
- What is the smallest sustainable version of that practice you could begin this week?
- How can our class help one another come back to fresh sight of Christ?

Question 9

Student Question:

At Caesarea Philippi Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" and then, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answers, "You are the Christ" (8:27–29). Connecting this confession with Matthew 16:13–19, John 20:28–31, Acts 8:35–37, Romans 10:9–10, and 1 John 4:15, what is the central confession of Christian faith, why is this confession essential to becoming a disciple, and what does it actually mean to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The journey to Caesarea Philippi is the pivot of the Gospel. The town itself was a Gentile center, dedicated to Caesar and to the god Pan. It was the kind of place where every political and religious power that claimed lordship in the ancient world had its statue or temple. There, in the shadow of every false lord, Jesus asks the question that defines the whole Christian faith: "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answers for the Twelve and for every disciple after them. "You are the Christ" (8:29). Matthew records the fuller form: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

This is the central confession of Christian faith. The New Testament repeats it in many places. John's Gospel was written "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). Romans 10:9–10 makes the confession of Jesus as Lord essential to the gospel response. 1 John 4:15 grounds fellowship with God in confessing Jesus as the Son of God. Acts 8:34–38 records the Ethiopian eunuch's confession in connection with his baptism, with verse 37 (in the longer reading) explicitly stating, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Even where that verse is not in the main text, the surrounding witness of Acts and the New Testament is unmistakable: confessing Jesus as Christ and Son of God is at the heart of becoming a disciple.

What does it actually mean to confess this? Several things, woven together. To call Jesus "the Christ" (Greek 'Christos,' Hebrew 'Mashiach,' Messiah) is to confess Him as the long-promised Anointed One, the Son of David, the King who was to come, the rightful ruler of God's people.

To call Him “the Son of God” is to confess His deity, His unique relationship to the Father, His authority to forgive sin, His right to receive worship and obedience. To call Him “Lord” is to surrender every other claim of lordship over our lives, including the lordship of self, of culture, of family, of money, of ambition, of comfort.

This confession is not merely intellectual. It is the orientation of a whole life. James says even the demons believe and shudder (James 2:19). True confession of Christ is faith expressed in surrender, repentance, baptism, and a transformed life. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). That confession is made decisively in connection with baptism into Christ (Acts 8:36–38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3–4) and continued throughout the believer’s life in word and deed.

For students, the question is the same one Jesus asked at Caesarea Philippi. “Who do you say that I am?” The right answer is essential. But the answer must be more than a recitation. It must be the kind of confession that orders the whole of life. Where is Jesus actually Lord in your speech, your money, your sexuality, your career, your relationships, your time, your loyalties? The confession of Peter is the starting point. The Christian life is the daily working out of that confession in every corner of life.

Help students rehearse the New Testament confession out loud. “I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Connect it to their baptism into Christ, where this confession was first publicly made. And then let it land where it must land: the confession is the foundation, and the building must follow.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Jesus as the Christ, the long-promised Messiah and King of God’s people (Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:6–7; Acts 2:36)
- Jesus as the Son of God, fully divine, the unique Son of the Father (John 1:1–18; John 20:28; Hebrews 1:1–3)
- The confession of Jesus as Lord at the heart of the gospel response (Romans 10:9–10; Philippians 2:9–11)
- Confession of Christ in connection with baptism as the apostolic pattern (Acts 8:36–38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3–4)
- The Christian confession as orientation of the whole life, not merely intellectual assent (James 2:14–26; 1 John 4:15)
- The church as the gathered confession of Jesus as Christ and Lord (Matthew 16:18; 1 Timothy 3:15)
- Continued confession in word and life as a continuing call upon disciples (Matthew 10:32–33; 2 Timothy 2:11–13)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it actually mean to confess Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God?
- How is this confession made decisively in the New Testament response to the gospel?
- Where in your life is the confession still in progress and needs to be made more fully today?

Question 10

Student Question:

The two-stage healing of the blind man and Peter's confession are placed next to each other on purpose. Peter has the right answer about Jesus, but the next paragraph will show that he still does not see clearly what kind of Christ Jesus actually is. Where in your own life is your answer about Jesus correct while your sight is still partial, and what one step of obedience could you take this week to put yourself in front of Him for the second touch?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The two-stage healing of the blind man at Bethsaida and Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi are arranged together for a reason. Peter has the right answer. "You are the Christ." But the next paragraph in Mark will reveal that his sight is still partial. When Jesus begins to teach that the Son of Man must suffer, be killed, and rise again, Peter rebukes Him (8:32). Peter sees Jesus is the Christ. He does not yet see what kind of Christ. He has the right answer and partial sight.

This is one of the great honest pictures of discipleship. Even genuine disciples often have the right answer and partial sight at the same time. We confess that Jesus is Lord and still try to keep certain rooms of life away from Him. We confess that He is our Savior and still try to save ourselves in particular areas. We confess that He is King and still try to rule. The answer is correct. The sight is partial. We need the second touch.

Help students identify the specific place where their answer is correct and their sight is still blurry. "I believe Jesus is Lord, but I have not surrendered this part of my life to Him." "I confess He is Savior, but I am still trying to earn my way in this area." "I know He is King, but I am still acting as if I were." The Christian life is the slow, faithful, daily work of letting our sight catch up to our confession.

The means of the second touch are familiar. The Word read with humility. The Lord's Supper received with attention. The assembly of the saints. Prayer that is honest about partial sight. Confession to brothers and sisters. Specific obedience in the place we have seen blurry for too long. Often the second touch comes not in a single moment but through these means working steadily over time.

Encourage students to identify one place where they need the second touch and one specific act of obedience this week. The chapter is not closed by Peter's answer. It is opened by it. The rest of Mark will show Peter, and us, what it means to follow this Christ all the way to the cross.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Christian life as the working out of confession in daily, concrete obedience (Philippians 2:12–13)
- The means of grace as continuing instruments of the “second touch” (the Word, prayer, the Lord’s Supper, the assembly, the company of saints)
- Sanctification as progressive sight of Christ in every area of life (2 Corinthians 3:18; 2 Peter 3:18)
- Christ’s patient, continued work in His disciples through their partial sight (Philippians 1:6)
- The danger of stopping at right answers without the matching life
- The encouragement that even the apostles needed time and continued touching to see clearly

Discussion Prompts

- Where is your answer about Jesus correct and your sight still partial?
- What is one specific obedience that would put you in front of Him for the second touch this week?
- Who could you ask to walk with you while He does that work?