

Section Three:
Mark 8-10

***Will you follow the
King to his death?***

Mark 8:27-9:1 *Upside-Down Values*

Before you start...

Surprise Tool: What things in this passage would have been a surprise for the original reader? What things surprise us?

What different surprises are there in this passage?

➔ What is Mark's purpose?

The King and his followers must die and rise: feel the shock!

This is the start of a new section in Mark's Gospel. The section is dominated by Jesus' death and resurrection, which he predicts three times (8:31, 9:31 and 10:33-34). Imagine how the disciples would have felt to hear Jesus speak like this: they have just understood that he is the Christ, the great King whom God promised would rescue his people and reign over the earth, and now he tells him that he must suffer, be rejected by the religious elite, and be killed. Such weakness and humiliation is *not* what they were expecting from God's King!

As if that wasn't bad enough, Jesus goes on to say that his followers must join him in this path of shame and suffering. When Jesus says that anyone who wants to follow him must "deny himself and take his cross", he is basically saying to them, "If you follow me, you must consider your life over". The demands of discipleship are incredibly high - but the reward is incomparably great: eternal life (verse 35) and being acknowledged by Jesus when he returns to judge (verse 38). On the other hand, if we live for ourselves now, we will forfeit eternal life.

Such a way of living seems to make no sense in a world obsessed with "me" and "now", and that is why this passage is so shocking. Jesus' values turn our world upside down, just as he points out that Peter's concern with "the things of man" is in opposition to "the things of God" (verse 33). The key to this lies in understanding Jesus' own death - but as verse 32 reveals, that is the very thing Peter fails to understand. Like the blind man in verses 22-26 who was given sight in two stages, Peter's faith is only "halfway there": he understands that Jesus is the Christ, but he does not yet understand that the Christ must suffer and die.

We might finish this passage feeling slightly overwhelmed by how radical Jesus' demands are, and depressed at our reluctance and inability to lose our lives for Jesus' sake. This is ok, as the rest of the section (chapters 8-10) will use this feeling of helplessness to teach us why Jesus' death is necessary (see Appendix). We can also take comfort that the things we lose are temporary, but the life we will gain is eternal. And we have seen already in Mark how wonderful Jesus is: it's worth making sacrifices to follow a King like him!

➔ Communicating Mark's purpose

Getting into the passage:

This starter question could help convey that Jesus' words here are completely different to how we tend to view the world:

- **When you hear 'king' or 'emperor', what sort of person do you think of? What would it feel like to be one of his followers?**

You could also ask the group to identify surprises in the passage.

It can be easy to gloss over the words Jesus says without really thinking about their meaning, especially if we are familiar with the passage. Spend time thinking about what it means to "take up your cross": a man carrying his cross was a criminal on the way to his death. It involved agony and shame; there was no place for cherishing hopes and dreams about the future. Jesus is not telling us to suffer just for the sake of it: he tells us that we must substitute our own agendas, plans and desires for his ("follow *me*... For *my sake* and the gospel's... *Me* and *my words*"). If we think we can apply this passage without it being painful, then we have not understood what Jesus is saying.

Only when we consider the future perspective does choosing to follow Jesus become attractive. Depicting verses 34-38 in a table helps to make this point. If we only look at the left hand column we would certainly choose the "things of man", but the right hand column makes all the difference!

	NOW	FUTURE
"Things of man" (8:33)	Life	Death forever
"Things of God" (8:33)	Suffering	Life forever

Engaging with presuppositions:

In China's religious vacuum, many are attracted to Christianity as a philosophy that will make life run more smoothly, help them achieve their dreams and give them personal fulfilment. Becoming a Christian can feel like adding an app to your smartphone: we easily download an app that we think will make life better, and can just as easily delete it if it doesn't produce the results we hoped for. This might be the attitude of people investigating Christianity, and even the attitude of some Christians.

This passage makes it clear that Christianity is not like a smartphone app! Becoming a Christian is a decision that changes the direction of our whole life. It is not a nice moral code; rather it is a lifelong allegiance to a person: King Jesus, who himself walked the path of death and resurrection, and calls his followers to do the same. Asking this question could help engage with some of these ideas:

- **How does this passage challenge what we often think about 'religion'?**
Or
- **How does this passage challenge what we live for?**

➔ Responding to the passage

As we respond to this passage, we should consider our attitude as well as our actions. Here are some suggestions of questions that deal with our attitudes:

- **Why do you think Peter found Jesus' words so hard to accept?**
- **Why do we also find them hard to accept?**
- **Following Jesus sounds so hard - why would anyone choose to do it?!**

This passage makes us all painfully aware of areas in which we have ignored Jesus' demands of discipleship. As we will see later in the section, Mark wants to use this both to humble us and to show us how to live. Therefore it is worth dwelling on some of these areas, perhaps asking questions like:

- **What bits of life might we want to keep for ourselves?**
- **Think of examples of ways we've been tempted...**
 - **... to gain the world rather than deny self?**
 - **... to be ashamed of Jesus and his words?**

Here are some areas that might be particular challenges for Chinese returnees:

- **Materialism: money and status**

Mainland China is becoming increasingly obsessed with money. Many people have opportunities to become richer than they ever dreamed, and there is huge pressure to pursue wealth above everything else. Returnees may have the option to "gain the whole world" (8:36), and it would be so difficult to choose to give this up for Jesus' sake.

- **Living to fulfil our parents' expectations**

This seems like a very noble ambition, but Jesus says that our allegiance to him must come before everything else, even our parents' expectations (for example in the area of who we marry, what job we take, how much time we spend at church...)

- **Being ashamed of Jesus' words**

It might feel relatively easy to be a Christian overseas, surrounded by good Christian friends. But what about back home in China where people may sneer at returnees for adopting a "foreign religion" (*yang jiao*)? It can also be tempting to be ashamed of Jesus' teaching, such as his claim to be the only way to know God and have eternal life.

For non-Christians studying this passage you could ask:

- **How does this passage help you understand what changes might happen in your life if you became a Christian?**

Mark 9:2-29 *Listen to Him!*

Before you start...

Using the **Context Tool** we know that this section is teaching us that Jesus must die (the section is dominated by three predictions of Jesus' death and resurrection).

- How does this passage fit with the theme of Jesus' death?

➔ What is Mark's purpose?

Believe Jesus must die to give life

In the previous passage Jesus announced that the Christ must die. This passage draws an emphatic line under that statement! Firstly, through the amazing events in verses 2-8, God the Father affirms that Jesus is his Son and commands the disciples to listen to him. Given the context (verse 2 tells us this is only six days after Jesus predicted his death), this must be a command to listen to what Jesus has just said: Jesus and his followers must lose their life. Moses and Elijah represent God's revelation through the law and the prophets in the Old Testament, and their presence demonstrates that Jesus' death is in keeping with God's Old Testament revelation. The radiant glory of Jesus should persuade the disciples to take his words seriously. Finally, their discussion on the way down the mountain (9-13) also emphasises that Jesus must suffer. The transfiguration is God's seal of approval on the controversial statement Jesus made in 8:31.

Secondly, the incident with the demon-possessed boy also serves to teach us that we must have faith in the cross. The issue of faith or belief is emphasised: the disciples are rebuked for their lack of faith (19), and this seems to be the reason why they could not cast out the spirit (even though Jesus had previously given them full authority over spirits). We know from context that it is the cross which the disciples do not yet have faith in. In contrast to the disciples, the boy's father displays a remarkable sort of faith, crying out "I believe; help my unbelief!" (24). In verse 29 Jesus commends the man's "prayer", pointing us to this man as a model of how we should approach Jesus. We should humbly confess our struggle to believe Jesus' words, express our willingness to believe, and ask for Jesus to help our unbelief. The language used to describe the healing in verses 26-27 suggests rising from the dead: this miracle represents Jesus' work of granting life in his kingdom (as introduced through his miracles in chapters 1-8), and it is only possible through his death. Therefore Jesus must die in order to rescue people from the shadow of death.

➔ Communicating Mark's purpose

Getting into the passage:

Context is important here, and can be highlighted by considering:

- How the disciples would have felt at the end of the previous passage (i.e. pretty confused that Jesus, the Christ, says he must suffer and die)
- This section is dominated by three predictions of Jesus' death and resurrection
- God's voice in verse 7 reminds us of his words back in Mark 1:11. This structure marker tells us that Mark is introducing a new facet of what it means for Jesus to be the Christ: the Christ must die.

Engaging with presuppositions:

Through the father's example in verse 24, Jesus is showing us what faith looks like. As you teach this passage, it could be worth considering how Jesus' definition of faith compares to a Chinese view of faith:

- "Faith" (*xinyang*) is something that belongs to western people and western religions; it feels foreign to many Chinese people.
- Many Chinese people see faith as an abstract concept that has nothing to do with the pressing affairs of real life. Traditional Chinese religion is practical, focused on actions rather than belief. For example, someone might go to a Buddhist temple to burn incense and pray for good health or a promotion: the emphasis here is on the action rather than on faith that the Buddha can change the situation.
- Faith is often considered to be something noble but unattainable; some people have it, some people don't, and there is nothing we can do to change that.

From this passage (and the whole of Mark's gospel) we can see that Jesus' concept of faith is different:

- Faith is not an abstract quality; it is *trust in a person*. As you go through Mark's gospel, consider the different reasons we have for trusting Jesus: he has authority greater than any human ruler; he uses his authority to help and serve others (unlike most human rulers!), he was promised by God centuries before his birth (the presence of Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration confirms this). He meets all of our longings for a trustworthy ruler. Rather than asking "Do you have faith?" we might ask "Can you trust Jesus as the ruler of your life?"
- Jesus engages with our deepest needs. We saw earlier in Mark that in Jesus' kingdom people can be set free from the "shadow of death": illness, evil and death itself. However, the root problem is our unclean hearts, which mean we experience God's judgment (Mark 7). Faith in Jesus doesn't offer us stability, prosperity and health in this life - but Jesus has proved that he is both willing and able to offer us these things eternally.
- This passage teaches us what to do when we recognise our own lack of faith in Jesus: we can ask him to give us faith! For non-Christians who are drawn to Jesus but feel unable to trust him completely, you can encourage them to ask God to "help my unbelief", and to keep reading Mark's Gospel to see in more depth how trustworthy Jesus is.

➔ Responding to the passage

Like the disciples, we need to be told to pay attention to Jesus' words. In the previous study we considered ways in which we struggle to accept Jesus' words about himself and his followers; you could revisit some of the areas of application from that study in considering a question like:

- **Why are we often unwilling to listen to Jesus' words about his death?**

We can also get into the narrative of this passage and consider how God demonstrates vividly that Jesus' death is necessary:

- **If you had been with Peter, James and John throughout this passage, how would your belief that Jesus must die be strengthened?**

For non-Christians and new Christians, you could begin to discuss how this passage shows us that Jesus' death is absolutely central to Christianity (even though Mark has not yet shown us *why* Jesus must die).

Mark 9:30-50 *First and Last*

➔ What is Mark's purpose?

Lose your life for Jesus by welcoming and serving other Christians.

In this passage the disciples get things wrong yet again! After Jesus' first prediction of his death and resurrection (8:31) Peter completely fails to understand and is rebuked by Jesus in the strongest terms. Here Jesus predicts his death a second time, and immediately the disciples start arguing about which of them is the greatest. Then they try to stop a man from casting out demons in Jesus' name. 9:32 provides the explanation for their inappropriate behaviour: they still do not understand Jesus' death.

As discussed in 8:27-9:1, Mark's intention here is to humble us. As we see the disciples' failure to follow Jesus, we are also made aware of our own inability to do what Jesus commands. On one hand Jesus' standards are refreshingly selfless: serve others, don't seek greatness for yourself, welcome other Christians. But on the other hand these standards are deeply depressing: as we read them we are made aware how far short we fall. What's worse, Jesus tells us clearly that failure in these areas deserves the eternal punishment of hell! (9:42-48) We are meant to leave this passage feeling more keenly that we do not deserve eternal life. This will prepare us to recognise our need for Jesus' death.

However, as with 8:27-9:1, Jesus does actually want us to live this way (see Appendix). We will learn by the end of chapter 10 that Jesus' death enables us to follow him in the way of the cross. Therefore in this passage we should start to consider what it would mean for us to put ourselves last (35), serve the insignificant (37), welcome all who follow Jesus (39-41) and avoid all things that might cause Christians to stumble (42-48).

➔ Communicating Mark's purpose

Getting into the passage:

Often we do not consider the areas of discipleship that Jesus focusses on here to be very important. This starter question will reveal how much importance your group members place on these issues:

- **Think of the Christians you most respect. Why do you think so highly of them?**

You could revisit this later in the study, and question whether we take these areas of life as seriously as Jesus does.

Engaging with presuppositions:

The lifestyle that Jesus describes here is counter-cultural no matter which culture we are from! Here are some of the ways that it might challenge Chinese culture:

- *“If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all”*
Chinese culture places great importance of the concept of “face” (*mianzi*): looking good in front of others. There is also a strong sense of hierarchy: it would be unusual to see people in a high position serving others by doing menial tasks. But Jesus calls his disciples not to fight over status; rather to take the lowest position of a servant.
- *“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me...”*
First we must understand what Jesus means by “children”. Unlike in present day China where the child is often at the centre of family life, in Jesus’ culture children were the lowest of the low. Therefore to “receive a child” was to welcome someone of no status, who had nothing to offer you. The modern-day equivalents to children might be poorly educated migrant workers, juniors in the office, or the person at church who is difficult to talk to. Jesus says that if we welcome such people, we are welcoming him!
- *“For the one that is not against us is for us”*
The notes on Mark 7:24-8:10 mentioned Chinese “insider-outsider” culture. Here Jesus says that Christians should identify with others who follow him, not excluding Christians that come from a different church or a different background. This is particularly relevant for returnees as they settle into church in China: they could be tempted to look down on the church back home because it may not seem to be as mature or as well educated as their church overseas. But Jesus wants us to be committed to serving his people, no matter what differences exist between us.
- *“hell... the unquenchable fire”*
None of us find it easy to think or talk about hell. We tend just to think about this life and the immediate consequences of our actions. But here Jesus lovingly warns us that hell is a terrible reality, which we should go to any extreme in order to avoid. Non-Christians might be shocked to discover that Christians believe in hell, and Christians are also likely to find this truth difficult. This reminds us just how important it is to go the way which ends in eternal life in God’s kingdom, and avoid the way that ends in eternal torment.

➔ Responding to the passage

A response to this passage should consider practical examples of ways we could obey Jesus’ teaching here, and reasons why we struggle to do this. To help show our need for the cross, you could ask:

- **How would a deeper understanding of Jesus’ death help us to do these things?**

Mark 10:1-31 *Impossible with Man*

Before you start...

Using the **Structure Tool** :

- Split this passage into sections
- What links are there between the different sections?

➔ What is Mark's purpose?

Humbly receive the kingdom; no one can earn it.

The Structure Tool highlights some big themes of this passage: entering God's kingdom/ gaining eternal life, and the idea of keeping commandments. This passage contains a sandwich structure: in 10:1-12 and 17-31 we meet people who are very moral by the standards of the Mosaic Law, yet Jesus reveals that even they are not good enough for God. They contrast with the insignificant little children in verses 13-16, of whom we are told "to such belongs the kingdom of God". Jesus is teaching us something unexpected about who can be in God's kingdom.

Verses 1-12 are not essentially about divorce. The Pharisees are trying to demonstrate that the Law permits divorce, but Jesus responds by pointing out that even though the Law gives provision for what to do if a divorce takes place (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), this does not mean that divorce is ok. Rather the Law was given in recognition that people have hard hearts (verse 5). Jesus quotes from Genesis 2:24 to show that God requires lifelong faithfulness, and labels divorce as adultery. The big point is that *even if you keep the Law, you still don't deserve eternal life because your heart is hard.*

Similarly, the rich man in verse 17 has done a good job of keeping God's commandments, but even he is not good enough to gain eternal life. By asking the man to give away all his possessions (verse 21), Jesus exposes the man's idolatry: he loves his possessions more than Jesus, and he loves treasure on earth more than treasure in heaven. He cannot gain eternal life. This amazes the disciples, who exclaim, "Then who can be saved?" Verse 27 is the key answer to the man's question in verse 17: "With man it is impossible, but not with God." We, the reader, do not yet know how God will make it possible, but we are convinced that we cannot rely on ourselves.

The example of the little children emphasises this: God's kingdom is for those who receive it like a child, i.e. those who receive entry to God's kingdom as a gift, not trying to earn it.

In context, this passage is great news. We left chapter 9 feeling deeply humbled by our failure to meet Jesus' standards. Yet here we learn that there is a way to gain eternal life which does not depend on our performance; indeed it cannot depend on our performance as even the most upright people are not good enough. Context suggests that this way is linked to Jesus' death... But we don't yet know how exactly...

→ Communicating Mark's purpose

Getting into the passage:

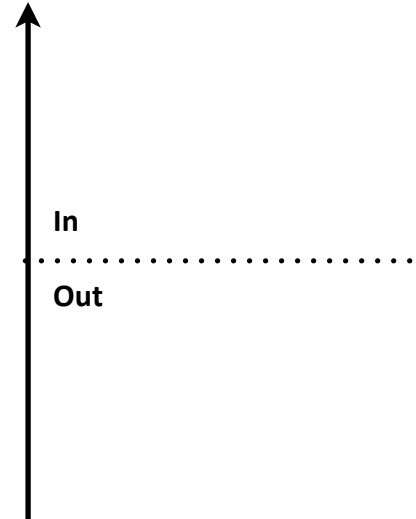
The big shock in this passage is what Jesus says about who can enter God's kingdom. You could structure your study around the 'Big Question':

- **Who can enter the kingdom of God?**

To introduce this idea, use a starter question like:

- **What might people in China say if you asked them: "If there is such a place as heaven, who is most likely to get in?"**

A diagram such as the one on the right helps to visually display how Jesus' definition of who can enter God's kingdom differs to what us or our culture often assumes. Throughout the study you could add information to it as we discover more about how Jesus answers the question "Who can enter the kingdom of God?"



Engaging with presuppositions:

Jesus' teaching on the following groups of people might challenge some of our presuppositions:

Children: Traditional Chinese thinking sees children as basically good, not yet corrupted by the influence of society. This could lead to the misunderstanding that Jesus commends children in verses 13-16 because they are less sinful than other people. However, context shows us this is wrong: Jesus demonstrated the corruption of the human heart in chapter 7, and here he is teaching that no one is good enough for God's kingdom. So in what way does Jesus want us to be like children? Verse 15 gives us the answer: we should receive God's kingdom like a child receiving a gift: eagerly accepting it, not offering to pay for it or trying to earn it.

- **Think of a child you know, and imagine you offered them a toy or some sweets. What would they do? How would they receive it?**

Rich people: Why were the disciples "amazed" when Jesus said "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!?" In their culture, being rich was viewed as a sign of being blessed by God, so the disciples would have assumed that rich people would find it easier to enter God's kingdom than other people. Jesus' words in verses 23 and 25 show that no one is able to enter God's kingdom by their own effort, not even rich people. In fact, it is even harder for a rich person, since entering God's kingdom involves abandoning trust in ourselves, our possessions and our performance, and coming to God empty-handed, like a child.

Good people: In almost every culture, we assume that it is good people who go to heaven, and Chinese culture is no exception. Buddhist ideas of karma are ingrained in people's ways of thinking: I will end up getting what I deserve for my actions, and the more good things I do now, the more blessing I deserve in the future. It involves a big mind-shift to understand that Jesus is not telling us

to become better people so that we can enter God's kingdom, he is telling us that *no matter how good we are, none of us can ever be good enough to enter God's kingdom.*

To help convey the shocking impact of Jesus' message, you could compare this rich man to the people who feature on the Chinese television show *People Who Move China* (感动中国), which recognises ten people each year who have made contributions to society and moved people by their sacrifices on behalf of others. However, according to Jesus' words even these outstanding men and women are not good enough to enter God's kingdom, because God's standard is 100%.

➔ Responding to the passage

The first step to responding rightly to Jesus' teaching here is to recognise that there is nothing we can do to earn entry into heaven/the kingdom of God. You could consider these statements, and what Jesus might say in response to them from this passage:

- a) Christianity is just like Buddhism - they're both ways of living a good life.**
- b) I'm embarrassed to receive so much from God; I want to rely on myself too.**
- c) God will let me into heaven because I've tried my best**

We should also consider what it will mean for us to receive entry to God's kingdom like a little child, humbly and empty-handed. Jesus reveals this to the rich man by asking him to sell all that he has and give it away (thus revealing that he did not whole-heartedly love God); he might ask us a different question:

- **What question would Jesus ask you to determine whether you deserve God's kingdom?**
For example, sacrifice others' good opinion of you; give up your career ambitions; risk your relationship with your family...

Considering this should humble us, and help us to have the attitude of a child receiving a gift. You could consider in more depth what such an attitude might look like in practice:

- **What would it look like for us to receive the kingdom like a child?**
Having a deep knowledge of our unworthiness
Confessing our failure to meet God's standards
No self-congratulating for our good works

Mark 10:32-52 *Possible with God*

Before you start...

Using the **Context Tool** :

- What themes in this passage have we already seen since chapter 8?
- How does this passage tie some of these themes together?

➔ What is Mark's purpose?

Jesus must die to ransom sinners: humbly ask for understanding

This passage seems to repeat a pattern seen twice already in this section: Jesus predicts his death and resurrection (32-24), the disciples say something that reveals their own selfish glory-seeking (35-37), and Jesus responds by teaching them how they should live as his followers (41-44). But this time there is new information: in verse 45 Jesus tells us *why* he has to die, a question that has been hanging over us since 8:31.

Verse 45 is the climax of chapters 8-10, resolving the building tension between what Jesus demands from his followers, and how far short of his standards they fall (see Appendix). Jesus' standards get higher and higher, until we see in 10:27 that "with man it is impossible" to enter the kingdom of God. But as promised in 10:27, God makes possible the impossible by sending Jesus to die as a ransom in our place! Now we see the link between Jesus' death and the disciples' failure: Jesus must die to set people like them free from sin.

This wonderful truth should cause us to deeply rejoice, and it should also empower us to live as followers of Jesus. We struggle to do the things required by Jesus in these chapters (be the servant of all, deny ourselves for Jesus' sake, welcome insignificant people, etc), but once we have understood that Jesus, the great King, came to serve us by dying for us, we are filled with gratitude and want to follow his example of sacrificial service.

Mark introduces another blind man to illustrate this. Just like in 8:22-26, blindness symbolises inability to understand who Jesus is and why he came. Bartimaeus' request is a model for us: he cries out for mercy and asks Jesus, "Let me recover my sight". Like the disciples, we often fail to fully understand Jesus' death, which is why we struggle to live in the way Jesus requires. Therefore, whether we are Christians or not, we are to copy Bartimaeus, humbly crying out for Jesus to give us understanding of his death as our ransom. Once we have this understanding, we can "follow Jesus on the way" (52).

➔ Communicating Mark's purpose

Getting into the passage:

In this passage it is important to spend time drawing together ideas from chapters 8-10, to show how Jesus' death as a ransom is the key to the whole section. Using one of the diagrams in the Appendix could help with this.

Consider how you will help the group to understand what Jesus means by a "ransom". A simple definition of the word is "a price paid to free someone from slavery". You could explain this using an illustration, such as a slave who has his freedom bought for him. In applying this to us we should consider:

a) What do people need set free from?

Mark's gospel has shown us that we are all enslaved to the sin in our hearts (2:5, 2:17, 7:14-23, 10:27). We should have seen this more and more clearly as we read chapters 8-10 and realise we cannot meet the standards Jesus sets for his disciples.

b) What is the price paid to set people free from slavery to sin

10:45: Jesus gives his own life to set us free. The ransom price is not cheap.

Engaging with presuppositions:

Many people think that Jesus died merely as a good example, to inspire his followers to give up their lives for others' sake. This passage tells us that view is half right: Jesus does want the disciples to follow his example. But if we only view his death as an example, we are missing the key. Jesus' death has a much greater reason: he died to set us free from sin and death, to give us forgiveness and eternal life. To engage with this, you could ask:

- **How does this passage help us respond to someone who says: *Jesus' death is such a good example to inspire us to be kind to others?***

➔ Responding to the passage

Blind Bartimaeus is one of the characters Mark gives us as a good example to follow. It is striking how he contrasts with the disciples: Jesus asks them exactly the same question in verses 36 and 51 and they give very different replies. The disciples ask for personal glory, while Bartimaeus asks for sight. As explained above, this is symbolic of spiritual sight: an understanding of Jesus's ransoming death. To bring this home to us, you could ask:

- **If you could ask God for one thing, knowing he would say yes, what would it be?**

Our answer should challenge us to consider whether we value understanding of Jesus' death highly enough.

A major line of response to this passage should be to wonder, marvel, rejoice, give thanks for Jesus' death:

- **How has this passage increased your wonder at Jesus' death?**
- **How can we encourage each other to wonder at Jesus' death?**

The second question models that response to God's word is a corporate activity. We ought to be concerned not only for our own growth in understanding and Christlikeness, but also for that of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Western individualism can often dilute this aspect of being a Christian. This type of corporate response question can be asked of any passage, and will encourage our Chinese friends to hold deep convictions about the importance of Christian fellowship, which should stand them in good stead when they return home.

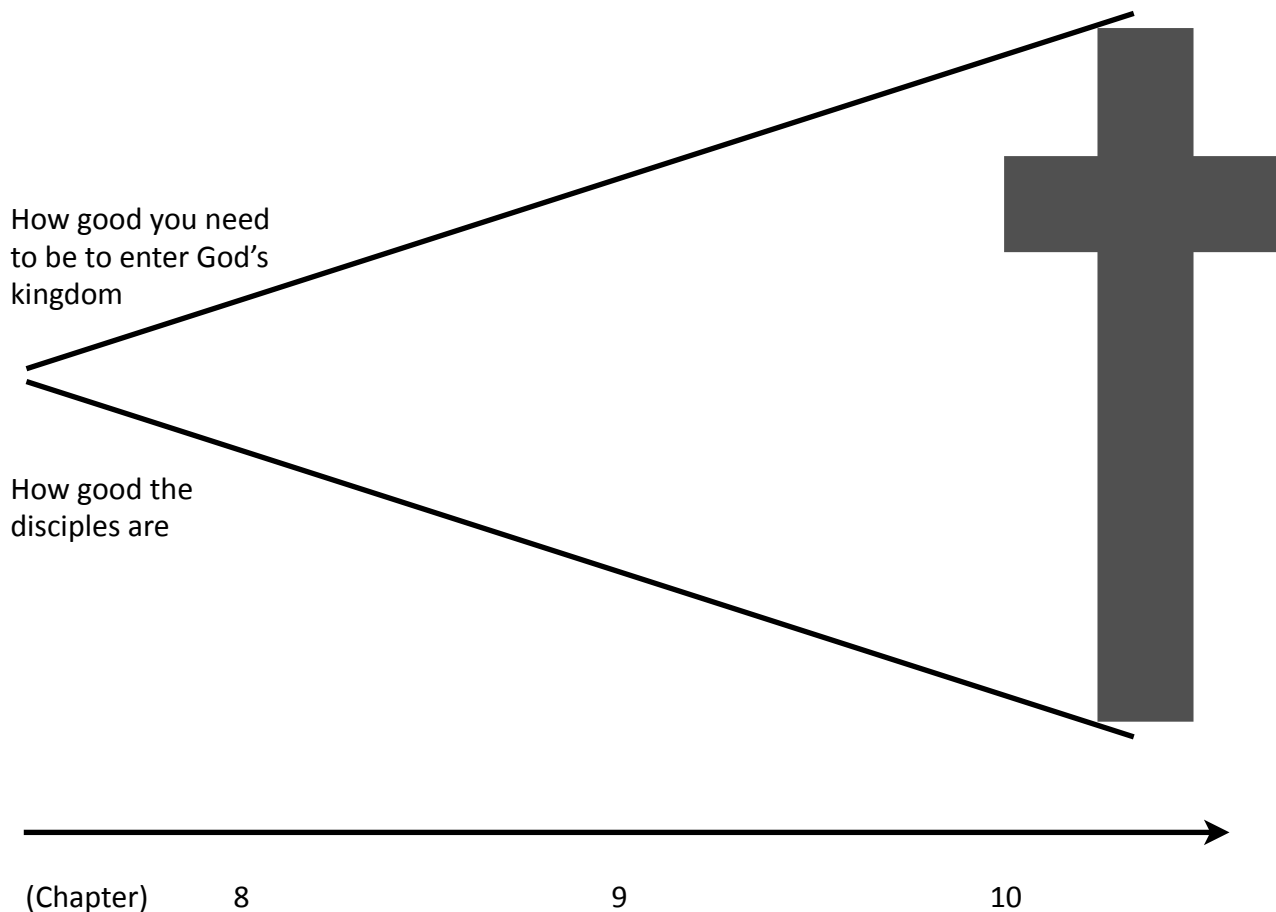
This passage also allows us to revisit Jesus' teaching on how his disciples to live (8:34-38, 9:33-50, 10:35-44), with a fresh motivation to do these things now that we have understood Jesus' death for us. Realising our failure to meet his standards should humble us, increasing our wonder at what Jesus came to do, making us prepared to give up anything for his sake - even our own life.

You could revisit any areas that emerged as particularly relevant to your group as you studied these chapters, such as those identified in the study on 8:31-9:1, for example:

- **How does this passage to share the gospel when we're tempted to be ashamed of it?**
We owe our lives to Jesus who ransomed us when we were facing death. He died a shameful death (10:33-34); how can we be ashamed of one who showed us such love?
- **How does this passage help us relate rightly to Christians we find annoying?**
We realise that Jesus loves them enough to die for them, he made himself a servant for their sake.

Appendix: Diagrams to help explain how chapters 8-10 fit together.

1. This diagram shows how the standards for entering God’s kingdom get higher and higher as we go through the section, and the disciples’ performance gets worse and worse. This highlights just how impossible it is to earn entry to God’s kingdom, and makes us feel more and more desperate. Finally in 10:45 we see that, wonderfully, through his death Jesus pays the ransom to set his disciples free from sin. He takes our failures and we get his good life.



2. This diagram shows how the twin responses of understanding Jesus' death and losing our lives for him fit together. In chapter 8 we are told that Jesus must die and his followers must lose their lives - but both of these are hard to accept. As we understand why Jesus must die and that his followers are incapable of losing their lives, we are pushed to humbly trust his death as our ransom. This in turn pushes us back to know these truths in greater depth - which leads us to further humbly trust his death! All of this understanding is granted as a gift as Jesus opens our eyes.

