

In **Mark 6.1-3** Jesus returns to his home town, where he does not find a favourable reception and cannot do the amazing deeds he has done elsewhere. He then sends his disciples out, two by two, to work in his name. Jesus tells his disciples that if they are not welcome in a town they should leave. Discipleship isn't all glory; there are times when it is hard work and we have to deal with failure.

This is the fifth of seven Bible studies in which we focus on Mark, and we are left with the challenge of considering how we might follow in those footsteps of the disciples, as we continue to explore what it means to be an apprentice of Jesus.

Bible notes

Jesus' family thinks that Jesus is insane (3.21). Those who have grown up with Jesus find it difficult to take him seriously. He is a carpenter's son, but from whom has he got all his knowledge and authority? Because people are sceptical, Jesus can do few works in his own town, and he is surprised at their lack of faith in him.

Time is urgent. Jesus calls his twelve disciples and sends them as apostles to go out in twos to continue his mission. He tells them to travel light, taking only a staff for support and protection, and to rely on the hospitality of those to whom they are travelling. This makes them vulnerable, as they need to accept the grace of receiving as well as giving. When they are not made welcome, Jesus tells them to shake the dust and move swiftly on. An important part of learning how to be a disciple is being an apprentice, learning to share the ministry of Jesus by trying it out. The apostles cast out demons, as they confront evil and heal many.

Make connections

We might think of the disciples being sent out to do something that they were ready for. They had followed Jesus, they had been commissioned and they had to go out and spread the news. Yet we know how difficult this can be. We face conflict and don't know what to do. Someone challenges our beliefs or understanding and we crumble. Jesus knew that his disciples would be challenged so he didn't leave them to struggle. He set up a model of interdependence and reliance on others, which is relevant for us today. So many people insist on 'doing their own thing', but working in partnership can be so much more effective and satisfying.

Explore

With a copy of the reading and a pen, work in pairs and read through it, using the following symbols to annotate it:



a verse that tells us something about Jesus or God



a verse that tells us something about people



anything you don't understand, or would like explaining



anything you find surprising



any verse you think is a key verse.

When you have finished, you can all share what you have found, and try to answer any questions that have been raised.

- Why do you think Jesus got the reaction he did in his home town?
- When Mark wrote his Gospel, he chose which stories to include and which to leave out. Why do you think he chose to include a report of Jesus failing?
- What do you make of Jesus' instruction to shake the dust off their feet if they are not welcomed in a place? Is he telling them to give up? Talk a bit about the importance of being able to discern whether to persevere or move on.