

Home group notes - w/b 8th December 2014 – John the Baptist

Use as much or as little as you wish. Allow time for prayer even if you cut short some of the study. You don't have to use all of these notes, and it doesn't matter if you get diverted into something else the group needs to study.

Read Mark 1:1-8 Notice the start to St Mark's Gospel. What makes *you* realise that Jesus is God in human form? Do you *need* the Christmas accounts in Luke and Matthew for that? Taking our cue from Mark, how could we lead enquirers beyond baby Jesus?

Read Mark 1:14-15 Why was John put in prison? **Read Mark 6:14-20**. Do you find people have a love/hate relationship with God (and perhaps with Christians)? Why do you think Herod was 'greatly puzzled yet liked to hear John'. How do you think he felt in **Mark 6:26**? Have you ever felt regrets for things you have done when carried along by others?

Jesus was very realistic about the times and about his challenging message. **Read Matthew 10:26-39**. How should we be bolder in our proclamation? *Notice that the chief opposition to Jesus was political not theological. If he had stuck to teaching safe Old Testament values with a bit of healing thrown in, there would have been far less opposition!* How do you react when politicians or newspaper proprietors today appeal to 'Christian values' – does this have any meaning?

Read Mark 6:21-28 Torture, persecution, dysfunctional family, child abuse, beheading... now, where do we hear things like that?

Keep a few minutes here for prayer before doing any more of the study. Plenty of prompts here for prayer for the wider world and for your own situations.

Read Matthew 14:13a The human Jesus needs a bit of solitude. What do you think might be going through his mind on hearing about John's mistreatment and death?

Read Matthew 14:13b-14 'Me time'? When have you had family or private time completely disrupted by needy people? What might we learn from Jesus? Could you envisage your plans for Christmas Day or a holiday away being disrupted by the needs of others? Where is the balance, and have we got it right?

Read Matthew 16:13-28 Read it slowly; put your name where Peter's is in the text. Hear God commissioning *you*. Ask God where you should start and then look for answers over the weeks ahead.