

Mark 4:26-34

Learner Session Guide



Focus Statement

We can discover the will of God whenever we discern the impulse for abundant life in all of its forms.



Key Verse

When [a mustard seed] is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in the shade. [Mark 4:32](#)

Seeing God's Will for Life Embedded in Creation

 Focus Image



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Gather

Check-in

Welcome to our three-session conversation with Mark 4 and 5! As you gather together around the Book of Faith, greet one another, share your expectations for this unit, and begin to ponder the will of God for your lives. Please know that the tone of this study is open-ended. You are free to ask questions and offer your insights. In fact, the conversation will be better for it!

Pray

Lord Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit, be present with us in your Word. Open our hearts and minds to your truth. Empower us with the willingness to share and to hear. We ask this trusting in your life-giving name. Amen.

Focus Activity

In this session's Focus Statement we read that God has embedded in creation an "impulse for abundant life in all its forms."

- How does the focus image illustrate this?
- Share an example of where you observed this impulse for life in surprising ways?



Notes

Open Scripture

Read Mark 4:26-34.

- What do the two parables have in common? How are they different?
- Do these parables challenge you in any way?
- What words or phrases touched you?

Join the Conversation

Historical Context

In Mark 4:26 and 30, Jesus tells us the central point of the parables: “the kingdom of God.” The understanding of the kingdom of God has changed significantly over history. God’s kingdom evolved from being a specific people chosen by God in a specific place of God’s choosing, ruled by God alone, to what we see in our text. For Jesus, the kingdom is the spontaneous and organic emergence of God’s heavenly ideals in ways that bless the whole earth. People in Jesus’ day had a hard time understanding this change. For this reason, he used parables—short stories that illustrate a moral or religious value—to help his listeners perceive the will of God and the evolving nature of the kingdom.

1. How does Jesus’ use of “kingdom of God” in Mark 4:26 and 30 compare to that of the Old Testament? Each of the following passages marks some development in the biblical understanding of the kingdom of God. Look them up in order and chart the evolution of this important term.

- Genesis 12:1-3
- 1 Samuel 8:4-9
- 2 Samuel 7:10-16
- Psalm 103:19