

FLOURISHING IN GRAD SCHOOL WEEK 4: CLARITY TAKES TIME

"At this point, there must enter into your heart whole new attitudes toward your entire life. If you are to branch out beyond just a time of prayer each day, other parts of your life—and even your whole viewpoint of life—will have to be altered. This new attitude must come for a very special reason—so that you may go on deeper, still deeper, into another level with your Lord. To do this, you must have a fresh attitude toward yourself as well as toward the Lord; it is an attitude that must go much deeper than any you have known previously. To do this, I must introduce a new word to you. The word is abandonment."

- Jeanne Bouvier de la Mothe Guyon

MARK 1: 21 - 39

²¹ They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²² The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³ Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, ²⁴ "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" ²⁵ "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" ²⁶ The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. ²⁷ The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." ²⁸ News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. ³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

³⁵ Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶ Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷ and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" ³⁸ Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." ³⁹ So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Read the passage out loud together. Give everyone five or so minutes on their own to review it. Invite study members to note things that stand out and add a comment or question about it on their sheet.

Discussion Questions

This full and fast-moving passage has three scenes. Where and when does scene 1 (verses 21 - 28) take place? Who is involved? What is happening? How are people responding to Jesus?

Where and when does scene 2 (verses 29 - 34) take place? Who is involved in this situation? What happens? How are people responding to Jesus?

Where and when does scene 3 (verses 35 - 39) take place? Who is involved in this situation? What happens? How are people responding to Jesus?

Why do you think Jesus gets up so early after a very busy day (rather than sleeping in)? What fruit comes from his time of silence and solitude? How does his prayer time affect his agenda? How does Jesus' agenda compare to Peter's?

We live in a noisy world with lots of demands on us. What does it mean to be devoted to a practice like prayer? Where/how do you find silence and solitude?

In verse 38, Jesus says that he has come to preach. How does he know this? What does it mean to have a sense of call? How clear is your sense of call? How are you working to discern it?

Are there other things from the passage you want to comment on or ask about?

The needs and opportunities seem to be growing throughout this passage, but because Jesus understands his job is to preach, he decides he must move on. In this case at least, he needs to stop the healing work in order to continue on to the next town. Consider the quote on the first page. Spend a few minutes filling in the table below. Reflect: what does abandonment look like for you? Are there things (good and bad) that you may need to say "no" to in order to say "yes" to your deeper calling? What are your "yeses" for this season of life? What will you need to say "no" to? Make a list of the things you might need to say "yes" or "no" to. Then consider how your yeses and nos might impact the people around you. In what ways might your yeses and nos be evangelistic?

When you are finished, discuss these final questions together and then pray for one another and for this group.

<i>Item to be considered</i>	<i>Yes/No</i>	<i>Possible impact on others</i>