

## When the World Shakes Small Group Guide

**Warm-up Question:** (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What's the most physically demanding thing you have ever done?
2. What is some good news you have heard within the last month?

**Read the following passage:** Mark 1:14-15.

In the middle of the topsy-turvy world of first-century Israel, Jesus announced that the kingdom of God had come near. He demonstrated the presence of God's powerful reign by healing, driving out evil spirits, and performing amazing miracles. This was great news to many in the crowds. They hoped this announcement meant that God would make things right by immediately defeating Israel's enemies and establishing Israel as preeminent among the nations. Instead, Jesus challenged his hearers to examine their own hearts and align themselves with God's will for their lives.

**Questions for Discussion** (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Like those in Jesus' audience in the first century, we can often feel like our world is out of control. Are there any circumstances in the world that are presently causing you distress? What about circumstances in your work, family, or personal life? Do you see any ways in which God may be at work in some of these circumstances?
2. Jesus announced the good news of the arrival of God's kingdom and taught that the kingdom will continue to advance until the end of the age (Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:20-21). How can we become more aware of what God is doing around us and how his kingdom is advancing? Are there any areas in or around your life in which you see God at work? Explain.
3. Sometimes moments of great pain or difficulty can lead to opportunities for major forward motion. For example, the persecution of the church in Jerusalem led to the spread of the gospel into new regions. Have you had experiences like this in your own life? Explain. What can we do to turn difficult moments into catalysts for growth and forward progress?
4. Jesus exhorted his hearers to "repent and believe the good news." Repenting requires us to acknowledge and own our failures. Are there any areas of shortcoming or failure in your life that you feel you need to better own? More generally, are there areas of your life in which you feel you have been making excuses for your lack of forward progress rather than taking full ownership? Explain.
5. How can taking the initiative to look for and own what you are responsible for improve conflict resolution?

6. Jesus says some remarkable things about the power of trusting in God. Read, for example, Matthew 21:21-22. How can we walk in greater faith? What are some areas of your life in which you think God wants you to walk in greater faith? How can we tell the difference between truly having faith in God for something and just being presumptuous? What is one thing you are trusting God for right now?

7. What is one way you want to become more effective at facing challenges in life?

**Pray**