

YOU'RE  
NOT  
FAR

## Part Six: Fortune Tellers

One message connected Jesus entire ministry for his first century listeners– the Kingdom of God is here, *now*, and it represents a complete reversal of the values of the world. Rather than instituting a series of man made rules that allow us to maintain a religious appearance, or following the laws of power that rule this Earth, Jesus inaugurated a kingdom of love, one in which authority and power leverages resources for the benefit of other people. Jesus's followers were certain that he was in the process of enacting a political revolution that would crush their enemies and put them in power. Yet, predictably, this new ethic of love was unpopular with the political and religious leaders of Jesus's time, and ultimately led to his arrest and death sentence at the hands of the authorities. And when the chips were on the table, the disciples reacted in a relatable, unfortunate way– they saw the painful reality dashing all their predictions and expectations, and they walked away from their friend and rabbi in defeat.

### Start Talking

1. Have you ever successfully predicted anything? What was it? How did the people around you react?
2. Have you ever had your hopes dashed? What happened? Have you ever had hopes surpassed? What was similar about these two situations?

### Looking Back

1. What did you do to implement what Andy called “not-so-with-you” leadership at home last week? At work? At church? In the community?
2. What fears bombarded you over the past few days? How did they tempt you to think about your own well-being above the well-being of others? Were you able to you resist that temptation?
3. Did you find any opportunities to imitate the example of Jesus in his encounter with Bartimaeus this week– to pause your agenda in order to pay attention to someone else's suffering?



## What About You?

1. Why does our faith have a tendency to rise and fall with circumstances? Did you come to faith in the midst of good times or bad times?
2. When is it easiest for you to believe? Hardest? Why?
3. Why do you think human beings have such a strong drive to know the future? When is this desire beneficial? When is it harmful?
4. When are you most likely to try to parse what the future holds for you? What effect does this effort have on your mood? Your mind? Your faith?
5. What is the relationship between the fortune-telling instinct we all possess (to some extent), and the fact that we secretly hope that God's plans coincide perfectly with our own expectations?
6. Andy says it is human nature to assume the worst about God when things are going badly. Have you ever done this? When?

## Look It Up

*Read the Following Passages: Mark 1:14-15, 10:43-45. 11:8-18. 12:12-34. 13:1-2. 14:1-24, 48-50.*

1. Leveraging Mark's words, have you ever "deserted" faith and "fled"? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Think about the political question the Pharisees asked Jesus about taxes. Based upon his answer, how would you describe Jesus's view of political power as it pertains to the Kingdom of God? How does his understanding of power differ from the Pharisees?
3. Why was it such a big deal to Jesus that the Jewish religious leaders were carrying around coins with Caesar's (who was seen as a god by the Romans) image on them?
4. What did the disciples seem to think was going to happen as Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the final Passover? How did this expectation interact with Jewish history and belief?
5. Why do you think Peter fled when Jesus was arrested? What was happening in his mind?
6. Read 1 Peter 3:9. What serves as the anchor or stabilizing force for Peter's faith? Based upon this, what role would you say that suffering plays in the life of a believer?

## Putting It All Together

1. When have you, like Peter, imposed your own expectations upon the mysterious plans of God? How has it worked out?
2. What have your reactions been when reality confounds your plans? How can you nurture a healthier response to the chaos of life over the next few days?
3. How can you let go of your expectations this week? What would this look like in your mental monologue? In your prayer life?
4. What are some ways you can remind yourself of Peter's later attitude towards suffering, described in 1 Peter 3:9?
5. Andy argued that the crumbling of outside circumstances shouldn't be taken as evidence that God is far away, or less than good. Who can you encourage along those lines this week? What acts of service might lend your encouragement more weight?

