

MARK

Following Jesus



A Bible Study
by Sue LeBoutillier

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❧ *The Book of Mark* ❧

Greetings Friend,

Would you care to walk back with me a few thousand years to the ancient city of Jerusalem? We'll find a young Jewish lad who lived during one of the most impactful periods of history. Jerusalem was his space and it was about to experience something like never before — and so was he!

Jerusalem had seen significant moments in its history: from David bringing in the Ark of the Covenant with great rejoicing, to Solomon building and dedicating the Temple, and even Zerubbabel reconstructing that same Temple from a pile of rubble. But, none of those events could compare with what was happening right before the eyes of one young man who was watching from the shadows. His name was John Mark and he would one day write the Gospel of Mark.

We'll learn that the Gospel of Mark could just as easily have been called the Gospel of Peter since what John Mark wrote was largely told him from Peter. In fact, Mark likely learned to *follow Jesus* due to the influence of Simon Peter, the fisherman turned *follower of Christ*.

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest of all four gospels and has its own personality. Its pacing is quick and its focus is often more on what Jesus *did* above what He *said*. But one of our main themes as we study this book will be *discipleship* — what we learn about *following Jesus* and how we can apply it to our lives.

It is my prayer that you are blessed as you invest your time in studying this smaller gospel!

Sue LeBoutillier

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"And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him."

~ Mark 1:17-18

How to use this Bible Study

Following Jesus is a women's Bible study on the book of Mark in twelve weekly lessons. Each of these lessons is broken down into five days of study; but you can adapt it to any system that works for your schedule.

Whether you are meeting to study with a friend, a small group, or doing this study on your own — the following would be an ideal path:

#1 Your first step will be to watch/listen to **Week One — Introduction**, either independently or with your group.

#2 Begin **Week Two in your Study Guide**

- ◆ Read the assigned scriptures and answer the questions for each day. This Study Guide is intended to be completed independently **before** you watch the teaching associated with each week's lesson. (Also note the *Questions for Thought and Discussion at the end of each lesson* — you won't want to miss them).
- ◆ Then watch/listen to that week's teaching using the links below. You can do this privately or with your group.
- ◆ Discuss the week's lesson in your group and pray together about applying the passages to your lives.
- ◆ Repeat this process as you do all the weeks in your Study Guide.

One last reminder — be sure to approach each of the above steps with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to give you understanding and speak to your heart.

To watch the video teachings for this Bible Study go to:

ccontario.com/womens-studies

or

[YouTube.com/calvarychapelontario](https://www.youtube.com/calvarychapelontario)

The best translation of the Bible to use is the one you understand best, and using more than one translation can be a useful aid in your study! This study guide was created using the ESV (English Standard Version).



Map of Judea During Jesus' Ministry



Use these pages to accompany the Week One teaching video.

(www.ccontario.com/wow-mark)

If you're studying in a group, the questions on page 7 may provide some good discussion starters following the video.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Often the very first words an author writes give us a clue as to what will be most important in what we're about to read. How do Mark's opening words prepare us for his message and for our Bible study?
2. Speaking of first words, read **Mark 1:15** and discuss how Jesus' first words are significant.
3. How would you explain to someone the difference between John's *baptism of repentance* and the *believer's baptism* we are familiar with today?
4. Both **Mark 1:18 & 20** say that the disciples *immediately* left their nets to follow Jesus when He invited them to *follow Him*. We'll find that Mark loves to use the word *immediately*. Has God ever asked you to leave something behind to *follow Him* more closely? Did you leave that *immediately*? Share your thoughts.
5. Based on the Introductory Teaching, what aspects of Mark's life would you say is the most relatable to *you*?

Week Two — Mark 1:21 - 2:28

Unlike Matthew's and Luke's gospels, Mark jumps right into Jesus' days of ministry. He skips over both the genealogies and history of his birth. We might say he *immediately* started sharing about Jesus' ministry. That is the pace we need to get used to for Mark's gospel.

In fact, in just this week's lesson we'll hear about Jesus casting out demons, performing all sorts of healings including leprosy and paralysis and *immediately* challenging the Pharisees.

Let's get started!

Day 1:

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✞ READ Mark 1:21-28 — *Jesus' Healing Ministry*

The first sentence tells us '*they* went into Capernaum.'

- Review **v.16-20** and list who was likely in the party with Jesus, described as '*they*.'

Are you surprised to read of someone with an unclean spirit in the midst of the synagogue — the spiritual center of community living?

- From **v.24**, what did the spirit claim to know about Jesus?

This is relevant because it shows us that from the very first moments of Jesus' ministry, the *spirit realm* knew exactly who Jesus was even before the people knew.

- From **v.26** how did the demon respond to Jesus' command to *come out*?
- From **v.27-28** how did the people respond to what had just happened?

It's interesting that Mark's gospel account opens with two significant interactions between Jesus and the devil — the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, and the confrontation of demons in the synagogue.

Perhaps we can learn from this that our personal lives and ministry will likely be challenged in similar ways.

Read **Ephesians 6:12** and note how this verse both reminds us of this truth and provides us instruction.

There are forty-two occurrences of the Greek word 'eutheos', which is usually translated 'immediately' in the ESV. You might try marking these in your Bible as you come to them. The point being made by Mark is one of continuous action — Jesus was always ministering.

How does that relate to us? Hopefully we can be inspired by the concept of continuous ministry. Hopefully we can learn to cheerfully serve those around us as Jesus modeled.

Day 2:

✞ READ Mark 1:29-45 — *Jesus' Ministry in Galilee*

We'll break up today's reading into three sections:

- ◇ Jesus healing Peter's mother (v.29-34)
- ◇ Jesus spending time in prayer (v.35-39)
- ◇ Jesus healing a leper (v.40-45)

It seems natural that Jesus and his disciples would be ready for a meal after their time at the synagogue — that's what we like to do after church, right? So they headed to Simon's home, probably anticipating a really great lunch.

- Describe the problem they realized once they arrived. (v.30)

- Describe Jesus' solution to the problem. (v.31)

- Describe the activity at the home later that evening. (v.32-34)

The likely reason people came after *sundown* was due to the Sabbath regulations which would have restricted their movement. Since we read '*the whole city was gathered at the door,*' we can imagine the healing service went long into the night.

- After a long night of ministry, *when* and *where* did Jesus seek an opportunity to pray? (v.35)

- How do those two aspects of prayer inspire you?

Clearly, there were hundreds of people who approached Jesus to be healed, but occasionally one person emerged as what we might call a *poster child* for Jesus' response. That seems to be the case with the leper in today's reading.

The first thing we need to realize is that a person with leprosy wasn't allowed to move freely among people. There were laws that kept them away from the general population and everyone knew it. But this man would not be held back by anything.

- In **v.40**, we get a glimpse into the leper's faith. What did the way in which he phrased his request reveal about his belief in Jesus?

I appreciate that the ESV tells us Jesus was *moved with pity*, but I think the NKJV translation of that phrase is even more relatable, "***Then Jesus, moved with compassion...***" Compassion is a more positive word in our vocabulary and one that can inspire us in our own life.

- From **v.41**, Describe Jesus's physical actions as he spoke healing over the leper.
- Why do you think this was more significant to the man than if Jesus had simply said the words?

Sympathy says, "I feel bad that you're hungry." Empathy says, "I know something about how you feel; I was hungry once myself." But compassion says, "Friend, let's go get something to eat."

Sympathy and empathy don't require action, but compassion causes us to touch, feed, and help those in need as Jesus did for the leper.¹

Day 3:

The first seven weeks of this twelve-week study will narrate Jesus' ministry in the region of Galilee including the towns of Capernaum and Nazareth. If you find geography even mildly interesting, you might want to turn back to the map on p.4 each time we read of a new city or location.

🌀 READ Mark 2:1-12 — *Jesus Healed a Paralytic*

When it was reported that Jesus was *at home*, the home referred to was presumably Peter's home — a return to where they gathered in the previous chapter — sort of a central base of operation.

There was a certain paralytic who had some amazing friends who wanted to get him right in front of Jesus.

- Write some ideas about what it must have physically taken to get this man face-to-face with Jesus.

*Bear one another's
burdens, and so fulfill
the law of Christ.
~Galatians 6:2*

- The de-roofers were persistent for sure, but what was it about these men that Jesus noted and commented on? (v.5)

We might find it a bit surprising that Jesus skipped over the obvious physical need for which the man was lowered in front of Him and moved right on to the greater spiritual need — forgiveness of sins. The mention of forgiving sins seems to have come out of nowhere, but Jesus was going to put this to good use.

- From **v.6** what type of people were sitting in the midst of the group and what were they questioning in their hearts?

It doesn't seem they were questioning Jesus aloud, but rather He knew their thoughts. This causes us to wonder if Jesus was intending for this particular healing to, as we say, *kill two birds with one stone*.

Jesus was about to prove He could do the unseen — forgive sins; by doing what was easily seen — healing a man who was paralyzed. And that is exactly what He did.

- Describe the reaction of the crowd from **v.12**.

In the midst of this episode, Jesus used an interesting phrase to describe himself — *Son of Man* (**v.10**). Mark records this title fourteen times in his gospel, but this is the first. Here, for the first time, it was Jesus' way of explaining his combined humanity and deity.

The Jews would have interpreted Jesus' use of the phrase, *Son of Man*, to mean any *son of Adam*, the first man. But they were also interpreting Jesus' actions to be in line with something that only God can do — forgive sins. The obvious conclusion was that Jesus was fully man and fully God.

Since Jesus can do what you can see, obviously he has the authority to do what you cannot see — say that an individual's sins are forgiven.
~ Paul LeBoutillier (study of Mark 2)

Day 4:

So far the men who have answered the call to *follow Jesus* are Simon and Andrew, James and John (**Mark 1:16-20**). In today's passage we'll add a fifth disciple to answer the invitation to *follow Jesus*.

READ Mark 2:13-17 — *Jesus Called Levi*

Mark uses an economy of words when he describes these men leaving their livelihoods to *follow Jesus*. It reads quite short and sweet, but we know there was quite a bit more going on than the simple exchange of words. *Following Jesus* is a life-altering change.

- What took place immediately after Matthew began to *follow Jesus* in v.15?

Reading **Luke 5:29** helps us see that the first thing Matthew did was to host a feast at his home and invite Jesus to influence his friends.

We could compare this to someone becoming born-again today and wanting all their friends to come to church and experience the same life-changing gospel.

The problem that Mark presents is that the Scribes and Pharisees saw it differently. They were incensed that Jesus would not only be in the same space as the lower class, but would defile himself by *eating* with them.

- Summarize Jesus' response in v.17 and what you think He meant.

☞ READ Mark 2:18-22 — *A Question About Fasting*

Each portion of chapter 2 contains challenges by the Pharisees to what Jesus and his disciples were *saying, doing, or not doing*. In this passage, they were being criticized for *not fasting*, as was the custom of the religious folk.

Jesus responded to their accusations with three analogies using everyday events or objects. The first spoke directly to the issues of fasting, but the second two were a bit more broad and began to open the conversation about the coming New Covenant compared to what they had known in the Old Covenant.

- Note the three analogies Jesus used in these verses:
 - V.19-20

 - V.21

 - V.22

Write a summary sentence of what Jesus was conveying through those three analogies:

Day 5:

We already noted that all of chapter 2 contained challenges from the Pharisees — this section is but one more challenge to the actions of Jesus and his disciples.

READ **Mark 2:23-28** — *Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath*

- What was it that Jesus and his followers were doing as they were walking along? (**v.23**) (Read also **Luke 6:1** for more detail)

- What day of the week was it?

To gain an understanding of the Pharisees' perspective, read **Exodus 20:8-11** and **Exodus 31:14**.

- Why do you think the Pharisees believed that Jesus and His followers were violating God's law with their actions?

There is another interesting aspect of the law that actually gave permission for someone to eat a handful of grain. **Deuteronomy 23:25** says, "*If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.*"

- What do you think was the intention of this law?

God's invitation for His people to *observe the Sabbath* was a means of remembrance of all He had done for them through both creation (**Genesis 2:3**) and rescuing them from slavery in Egypt (**Deuteronomy 5:15**). But the Pharisees had turned it into a burdensome task of keeping dozens of rules that merely danced around the main point.

It's interesting that Jesus' response gave an example of someone whom they respected seemingly *breaking* one of God's laws for a greater purpose.

- Read **1 Samuel 21:1-6**. What did David ask for and why?

- Read **Leviticus 24:5-9**. Who was allowed to consume the show-bread according to this law?

Do you find it interesting that Jesus basically vindicated both David's request and the High Priests' decision before the Pharisees?

- Write in your own words the point that Jesus was making in **Mark 2:27-28** about the heart of the Sabbath.

We're not finished with accounts of Jesus serving people on the Sabbath in a way that the Pharisees believed was wrong. We'll start right in again in the opening verses of next week's lesson. Perhaps, for today, we could sum up the Sabbath lesson by saying that God's laws merely prohibited people from carrying on their regular work on the Sabbath; He did not prohibit mercy on the Sabbath.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law from her sickness and she immediately began to serve those around her. Name a specific practical application for your own life from her example.
2. Jesus withdrew for prayer early in the morning to pray after an intense session of ministry. Name a specific way this inspires you to make adjustments to your own time with the Lord.
3. Can you think of a passage from the Psalms that contains the word *compassion*? Share it with your group and consider how it connects with the story of Jesus showing *compassion* to the leper.
4. The people that brought the paralytic to Jesus were physically acting out what **Galatians 6:2** expresses. Read that verse and share how God might be encouraging you to take similar action.
5. Read **Psalm 1:1-2** and discuss the balance for us between this wisdom and the actions of Jesus while attending Matthew's feast with His friends.
6. Discuss the various ways in which we witnessed Jesus as a *servant* in these passages to the people who approached him.

Week Three — Mark 3:1 - 4:20

The conflict presented in Mark's gospel now escalates quickly. Yes, there were multitudes of people flocking to Jesus for healing or hope, but there were also demons and detractors that were intent on causing a stir. The demons, Jesus easily dealt with — but the detractors, like the Pharisees, He seemed to confront and then simply let them go their own way.

Day 1:

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✞ READ Mark 3:1-6 — *A Man with a Withered Hand*

It seems that every time Jesus would enter a synagogue from here on — there were the Pharisees — stalking him.

- According to v.2 for what purpose were they watching Jesus?

- Read **Matthew 12:10**. What question did they boldly ask of Jesus and what assumption underlies that question?

Note Jesus' question back to them in v.4. He offered two opposing possible actions that one could do on the Sabbath:

To do _____ or To do _____
To _____ life or To _____

- What *good* thing did Jesus have in His mind to do on that Sabbath day? (v.3)

- What *evil* thing did the Pharisees have in their minds to do on that Sabbath day? (v.6)

Continue reading Matthew's account of this same event from **Matthew 12:11-12**. In that passage Jesus answered with an analogy that would have been relevant to all His hearers. He ended His story with a question that underscored the motive behind the healing He was about to perform.

- Not only were the Pharisees not willing or able to answer His question, but according to v.6 where did they go, and with whom did they partner?

The happy ending of this event is that a man was healed from the terrible affliction of not being able to use his hand!

READ Mark 3:7-12 — *Crowds Followed Jesus*

Take a look at your map on p.4 once again to get a perspective on just how far people were traveling to come to Jesus. Some from as far as 90 miles away!

- What was one reason that so many were coming to Jesus? (v.10)
- How did Jesus deal with the unclean spirits that were found among the crowds of people? (v.11-12)
- Why do you think Jesus did this?

Day 2:

Today's passage is a bit more informational than devotional, but we learn a lot from information too, so let's dig in.

READ Mark 3:13-21 — *The Twelve Apostles*

- According to v.14 what word was used to describe the twelve men that Jesus invited to *follow Him*?

- What assignment and what sort of authority did Jesus give to them? (v.14-15)

The word apostle, 'Apostolos' means to separate out; by implication, to send out one to an appointed place.
Strong's #649

List the twelve apostles below:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 12. _____ |

What an eclectic group! The fishermen had quite a bit in common, but the addition of a tax collector and a zealot had to have seemed unconventional. We wonder if Jesus chose a variety of backgrounds by design to set a tone for the future Body of Christ.

Consider the eclectic nature of your own church body, or your study group. How has the Lord caused you to bond together as ONE even though you have come from a variety of backgrounds?

Day 3:

🌀 READ Mark 3:22-30 — *Blasphemy Against the Holy Spirit*

- What had the scribes decided was a valid explanation for the source of Jesus' power to cast out demons? (v.22)

- From v.23-26 summarize Jesus' logical response as to why their claims couldn't possibly be true.

The unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a very troubling passages of Scripture for some people. It's not uncommon for a tender and teary soul to confess their concern that they have somehow committed this sin. When they do, Paul and I always assure them that if they are worried about it — they *haven't done it!*


First, let's note the context of Jesus' words here — these statements didn't come out of nowhere — they were part of a rebuttal to the scribes who were challenging Jesus' authority. Let's break this down.

The religious leaders (scribes) were claiming...

- ◇ ...that Jesus was possessed by Beelzebul (Satan)
- ◇ ...the work Jesus did by the power of the spirit was a work of demons — in other words they called the Holy Spirit a demon.

Jesus was saying...

- ◇ ...all sins are forgivable EXCEPT defiant hostility toward God. This, by nature, would reject His saving power in a person's life.
- ◇ ...there is no forgiveness for one who rejects God.

 READ Mark 3:31-35 — *Jesus' Family*

These last few verses pick up the narrative from **v.20-21**.

- According to **v.21** what had Jesus' family come to do and why?

- What events do you think may have contributed to their assessment of the situation?

We're told that Jesus' family was standing *outside* while those who had chosen to *follow Him* were sitting around Him on the *inside*.

- What type of comparison do you think Mark was alluding to by giving us those details?

Family is very important today, but it was everything in the first-century culture. Therefore, Jesus' reply regarding His family may seem cold and distancing at first read. But, if you consider it from the point of view of **v.34-35** it seems warm and including.

- What did Jesus say was necessary to be included in His family?

Day 4:

📖 READ Mark 4:1-9 — *The Parable of the Sower*

I appreciate that Mark often used just enough detail to help us create a pretty good picture of these events in our minds. In chapter 3, Jesus had asked His disciples to have a boat ready because of the crowds. Here, it seems the time was ripe to make use of that boat — and how handy was it for Jesus to use as a lectern out on the water, which helped project His voice like a microphone.

- Look up the word *parable* in a dictionary and write a definition below.

- Why do you think it was so smart to tell a story about seeds and planting to this particular crowd?

Let's make a simple chart of the parts of the parable:

Verse	Where the seed fell	The problem/profit
V.4		
V.5-6		
V.7		
V.8		

This parable might be familiar, and its meaning obvious because we've heard it before. But it was not self-evident to the crowd that day, so Jesus left them with the encouragement to think it over — ***"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."***

Day 5:

☞ READ Mark 4:10-20 — *The Purpose of Parables*

In these verses, there is a change of location. It also seems to be a smaller, closer group of followers that Jesus was talking with. Note that Mark again uses *proximity* phrases in v.10-11 similar to what we read in the previous chapter: “*those around him*” and “*those outside.*”

- Describe the difference in understanding between those two groups.

It could sound like Jesus was toying with people — purposefully concealing the meaning of His parables — ‘*lest they turn and be forgiven.*’ But that’s clearly not the case.

Take a look at how one commentary explains *the secret* (v.11):

*The secret has been given to the disciples because they have responded in faith, but to ‘those on the outside’ (men hardened by unbelief), ‘everything’ (the entire significance of Jesus’ person and mission), are ‘in parables.’*²

An important thing to perceive from this passage is the contrast in the ability to understand spiritual things between those who are *following Jesus* and those who remain on the *outside*. This will be a theme that carries through this gospel and one that we should ponder for our own lives.

- In the explanation of this parable, what does the *seed* represent?
- Count the number of times you read ‘*word*’ in v.14-20 _____

For the remainder of this day of study, let’s consider what Jesus taught about these soil types that the *word* fell into. You may once have identified with one particular type of soil (for example, before you came to Christ), but now identify with a different one.

But, even after we have been *following Jesus* for a season, our *soil type* may change and even threaten our ability to hear the *word* and produce fruit.

Consider each soil type in this parable, what Jesus explained about each type, and note the specific perils that may exist in your own life that may draw you into that condition.

Soil along the path—

What it represents:

How it could be a challenge in your life:

Soil on rocky ground—

What it represents:

How it could be a challenge in your life:

Soil with thorns—

What it represents:

How it could be a challenge in your life:

Good soil—

What it represents:

Why it is so desirable in your life:

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. One way legalism might be described would be *loving rules and regulations more than loving people*. That was the case with the Pharisees at the synagogue. Read **Matthew 22:39** and discuss how Jesus followed the spirit of this command and how it might help us make decisions also.
2. At any point in your life, have you been concerned that you accidentally committed the *unpardonable sin*, and how are you better equipped to explain it to someone now?
3. Relationships are built around commonality — common interests, or goals. That’s why a Christian’s closest relationships are usually between those in God’s family and why Jesus was closer to His disciples at this point in His ministry than His family. Consider your closest relationships — are they believers or unbelievers?
4. As an additional way of considering the soil types, read **Ephesians 2:1-3**. What are the three powers expressed in this passage that war against us hearing *the Word*? Discuss how we can encourage each other to dwell in the best spiritual soil.
5. Since we know that our *soil-type* may change, which *soil type* best represents your current response to God and His Word today?

Week Four — Mark 4:21 - 5:43

Day 1:

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We all have our preferred ways of organizing information. Mark tended to organize his gospel by themes rather than chronology. That may be why chapter 4 is exclusively parables.

If you love parables, you're in for a treat today as we study *three* of them and see what we can learn to help us *follow Jesus*.

🌀 READ Mark 4:21-25 — *The Parable of the Lamp*

- By describing situations where a lamp is hindered from fulfilling its purpose, what is Jesus declaring about the purpose of a lamp?

Read the parallel account in **Matthew 5:14-16**.

- What is the obvious instruction given to those who are *following Jesus*?

Jesus wanted His followers to not only *listen* to His teaching but to make good use of what they *heard*.

- Summarize the promise in **v.24-25** for gain or loss depending on how the follower applied Jesus' words.

🌀 READ Mark 4:26-29— *The Parable of the Seed Growing*

This particular parable is only found in Mark's gospel so we don't have much context to help us understand the meaning. However, there is probably a consistency with the *sower* representing one who shares about the Kingdom of God, and the *seed* representing the Word itself just like a previous parable in this chapter.

- What do you think the parable is explaining about the growth of the seed?
- What do you think the parable might be explaining about the harvesting of the seed?

🌀 READ Mark 4:30-34 — *The Parable of the Mustard Seed*

There are really two things in view in this parable — the *seed* and what becomes of it — and the *birds*. Let's take them one at a time.

- What are the words used to contrast the *seed* and the grown *plant* in v.31-32?
- How might that describe how people and their ministries grow in the Kingdom of God?

The *birds of the air* often represent people in general (not necessarily Christians). In this parable the mustard tree provides security and support for *the birds*.

- Explain what that might mean in our experience today.

Day 2:

✞ READ Mark 4:35-41 — *Jesus Calmed a Storm*

These final six verses of chapter 4 connect to the opening verses when we read about Jesus getting in a boat and pushing out from the shore to teach the people. Now at the end of the day, He's ready to leave the area and go to the other side of the sea.

An abundance of details often indicates an *eye witness* account — and Peter is the likely source as an *eye witness*. In the midst of the details, the obvious problem was the windstorm.

- Compare and contrast how the disciples reacted to the storm and how Jesus reacted to the storm.

In **v.38** the disciples' question to Jesus could be considered a *rebuke*. However, when Jesus awoke His *rebuke* was directed at the elements of nature — the wind and the waves.

Write Jesus' words here: _____

- What was the response from nature?
- What was the response from the disciples? (**v.41**)

Isn't that fascinating? The creator controlling what he created!

- Read **Colossians 1:17**. How do these two passages connect?

Day 3:

READ Mark 5:1-20 — *Jesus Healed a Man with Demons*

Once Jesus and company got to the other side of the sea, the chaos continued. First it had been the chaos of the crowds, then the chaos of the windstorm, and now the chaos of demons confronted them.

- What are some of the details given about the man with demons from v.2-5?

Yet, despite his bizarre and super-human demonic behavior, this man came to Jesus and fell down before Him.

- Do you think it was the demons falling before Jesus, or the man himself?
- How did the man respond when Jesus asked for his name?
- What was the final outcome for the demons? (v.10-13)

The Latin word “Legion,” commonly known in Palestine, denoted a Roman army regiment of about 6,000 soldiers, though it probably also meant a very large number.³

Everyone appreciates a good *before* and *after* story. The situation with this man who had been plagued with demons is probably one of the most dramatic *before* and *after* portraits in all of Jesus' travels.

- In the same way we noted the *before* details about the man on the previous page, now let's note some of the *after* details that can be found in **v.15**.

- How did the herdsmen respond to this miracle? (**v.14**)

- How did the people who rushed in from the surrounding areas respond? (**v.17**)

- How did the man himself respond? (**v.18**)

WOW! Such different responses. It's actually the same today. The work of God will either draw people to Himself or repel them. If we're careful to pay attention throughout this gospel, we'll find that Mark often highlights the contrast between those who chose to *follow Jesus* and those who chose to go their own way.

- Note what you see in the final verses about how the man used the change in his life to proclaim the gospel of Jesus.

Day 4:

✞ READ Mark 5:21-34 — *Jesus Healed a Woman from Bleeding*

Jesus and the disciples were now back on the previous side of the sea, likely near Capernaum. The remainder of this chapter gives us a glimpse into the actions of two very desperate people who approached Jesus in very different ways — but with very similar faith.

- What did Jairus ask of Jesus? (v.23)

- How did Jesus respond? (v.24)

And off they went to Jairus' home along with a great crowd. We can picture the throng about him — all rubbing shoulders, chattering, and kicking up dust. So many people moving along with Jesus, yet, in the midst of them all was *one woman* with a desperate plan.

- What was the medical and financial problem that the woman had suffered from? (v.25-26)

The woman's problem had to have made her life miserable. It affected her sexuality and ability to bear children. It affected her spiritual life since she was perpetually unclean and therefore excluded from the synagogue. And it affected her social life because anyone she touched would also become *unclean* as she was.

Certainly she had hoped to find Jesus alone, but the reality was the opposite. She would have to risk pressing through a crowd and coming in contact with many people in order to come near Jesus.

- With her simple faith, what did she decide was all that would be needed for her healing? (**v.28**)

- Many people were touching Jesus at once. Why do you think His healing power went out to this one particular woman who had touched Him?

Once she actually touched Jesus, she must have experienced a wide spectrum of emotions because of how the situation played out.

- Even though we're not told, describe what must have been her initial emotions from **v.29**.

- Now, describe how her emotions must have suddenly turned in **v.33**.

We love stories that highlight Jesus' compassion — it gives us hope that He would do the same for us. But there is one more piece in this narrative that elevates the outcome even more. Write the words that Jesus said to the woman from **v.34**.

Day 5:

🔗 READ Mark 5:35-43 — *Jesus Healed Jairus' Daughter*

As Mark narrated these very personal healings he even connected them with some interesting word choices. Did you notice that Jairus' daughter was twelve years old and the woman happened to have been bleeding for twelve years? The second nuance is the use of the word *daughter* — that's what Jesus called the woman and now we read about the healing of *another* daughter!

- How do you think Jairus may have felt when Jesus stopped the forward progress to his home in order to heal the woman?
- How do you think those emotions may have been compounded when the message came that his daughter was dead?

Both of the people in this passage experienced a wide spectrum of emotions that flowed from *hope* to *joy* to *fear* but ended with *joy*.

- Jesus must have sensed Jairus' emotions in **v.36**. How did Jesus encourage him?
- Why do you think Jesus took only Peter, James, and John, and the girl's parents with him to her room? (hint in **v.40**)

List the variety of healings we have studied from this week's lesson:

*Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want.
Faith is the belief that God will do what is right.*

~ Max Lucado

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Jesus explained that the purpose of a lamp is to bring light, not hide light. Share any fresh inspiration you have received from the Lord to better expose the light you have.
2. In **Mark 4:31**, Jesus described the Kingdom of God as having a small beginning like a mustard seed, but growing into a large tree. Share something in your Christian experience that began very small, but God grew it into something of substance.
3. The disciples were clearly fearful in the boat during the storm. The way they reached out to Jesus seems a little awkward, but they did reach out. Discuss the reasons we might continue in fear rather than asking Jesus for help in the midst of our storms, and how we can conquer those fears.
4. The demoniac experienced a dramatic change that provided an opportunity to tell people what Jesus had done for him. What type of change has Jesus made in your life that people might be willing to listen to?
5. We all want to step out in faith like Jairus and the bleeding woman. We also may experience a spectrum of emotions as they did. How can we hold onto Jesus' words in **Mark 5:36**, "*Don't be afraid, just believe?*"

Week Five — Mark 6:1-56

Day 1:

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This week's lesson includes a real *mixed bag* of topics — some more relatable than others. We'll study some sticky family dynamics, a missions trip, some political history, the appearance of miraculous bread, another storm on the sea, and more crowds of people coming for healing.

Don't worry, we'll break all of those topics down into bite-sized pieces to discover how they all relate to *following Jesus*.

READ Mark 6:1-6 — *Jesus Rejected at Nazareth*

We most recently left Jesus at the house of Jairus — which was probably near Capernaum. Now Jesus and His disciples traveled to His hometown, Nazareth.

- What did Jesus do on the Sabbath that was typical of so many other places He had been? (v.2)

- How did the local people react to Jesus' teaching? (v.2-3)

- What was Jesus' insight into their reaction? (v.4)

- Why do you think He could not do many miracles among the people of Nazareth? (see also **Matthew 13:58**)

Day 2:

✞ READ Mark 6:14-29 — *The Death of John the Baptist*

We're probably most familiar with King Herod who ordered the baby boys to be killed at the time Jesus was born. This isn't the same Herod in this passage — this is his son, Antipas, and he was no king at all but merely a Tetrarch (meaning ruler over the fourth part). Nonetheless, he ruled like a king and that may have been the customary local title.

The point is that the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles had become well-known and people were talking.

- Who did some of the people say Jesus was?
- Who did Herod say Jesus was based on his guilty conscience?
- From **v.17-20** describe what had caused Herod to imprison John in the first place.

The remaining verses provide the political history of how it came about that Herod ordered the beheading of John. It's a frustrating tale of intrigue and pride and seduction that ended John's life on earth. Herod immediately regretted how it had all played out, but he had tied his own hands.

Mark's gospel had opened describing the important ministry of John the Baptist, so it makes sense that he would give us a substantial report on how his life ended.

- What tender act do we read of in **v.29**?

Day 3:

✞ READ Mark 6:30-44 — *Jesus Fed Five Thousand*

When Jesus invited his apostles to ‘*come away by yourselves and rest,*’ we’re meant to feel their strain and their *need* for rest. They had recently experienced the fatigue of their travels, the grief over John, the constant strain of the crowds, and now Mark described the demands on their time.

- How was their extreme level of busy-ness described in **v.31**?

Success! They were all able to escape in a boat and head to the opposite shore for some much-needed R&R! Except...

- Describe how the crowds of people circumvented their attempt for rest.

I don’t know about you, but when people force my plans to change, I get a little testy. Not Jesus! I have always loved how Mark describes Jesus’ emotions in this moment — ***He had compassion on them!*** What you and I would have seen as the annoyance of people who don’t know when to back off, Jesus saw as a flock of sheep merely looking for a shepherd who would take care of them. And they were desperate for that care.

- How did Jesus begin to care for these people in **v.34**?

Have you ever gotten so caught up in a project or activity that you forgot all about eating? It's not that uncommon for the engaged mind to override the hungry stomach. That's what seems to have been happening in this moment. No one had moved, no one was thinking of food — so the disciples decided to think about it for them.

- What was the disciples solution to the current problem? (v.35-36)

- What was Jesus' solution to the problem? (v.37)

Their response was logical and understandable — calculating what it would cost to feed such a huge crowd. But the one who had recently ordered demons to flee, told the wind to shush down, and raised the dead back to life had a plan — and it had nothing to do with buying bread from the local bakeries.

Let's talk numbers:

- How many loaves were found among the people?
- How many fish were found?
- What size groups were the people organized into?
- How many baskets of food were left after everyone ate?
- How many people had been fed?

The numbers are impressive, but it's clear that Jesus mostly wanted to grow the faith of his followers.

What about your faith? In what area do you have such a small amount to offer that it seems almost laughable? Can you find inspiration from this episode to believe that God could multiply your small offering to meet the needs of many around you?

Day 4:

READ Mark 6:45-52 — *Jesus Walked on the Water*

Not only is *immediately* one of Mark's favorite adverbs, but in this case it probably described the hurried departure of the disciples.

- Once the disciples got into the boat headed for Bethsaida, where did Jesus go and why? (v.46)

In a few different ways, Mark made the point clear that Jesus and his disciples were now separated — Jesus on land and the disciples on the sea. As a group, the disciples' faith always seemed to be more on point when they were closer to Jesus, so this distance seems to play into their fears to come in a few verses.

- What words describe their progress in the boat? (v.48)

Nothing seems to indicate that their lives were in peril, it's just that moving forward toward their destination was an arduous task. Can you relate? How many times in your life — or right now — have you felt that you were *making headway painfully* because life seemed to be pushing against you? Note your thoughts here:

In this passage, the disciples didn't seem to *call out* for Jesus — *He* was the one who was watching over *them*. The fourth watch of the night fell between 3am and 6am, so they had been struggling for the better part of the night — and Jesus allowed them to struggle before He came to them.

- Why do you think Jesus allowed the disciples to struggle for a time before making Himself known?
- Why do you think God allows *us* to go through difficulties for a period of time before making himself known?
- What was their reaction when they finally saw Jesus? (v.49-50)
- Write out Jesus' response to them from v.50.

That statement above, coupled with the phrase that says Jesus '**got into the boat with them**' gives me a lot of comfort for the difficult situations in my life. Another way to say it might be '*Jesus enters into my world.*'

- Share how that encourages *you* in your current circumstances.

Day 5:

🔗 READ Mark 6:53-56 — *Jesus Healed the Sick in Gennesaret*

When the boat carrying Jesus and the disciples arrived at the shore, they were actually in a different location than they intended to be. They had meant to head to Bethsaida, but v.53 tells us they *came to land* at Gennesaret. Those two towns are quite a little distance apart.

Isn't it interesting in our lives that we sometimes end up in a different place than we intended to be. That's not always bad. God works all things together for His purposes, and that seems to be what happened in this account.

- From v.54-55, describe the reaction to the local people when Jesus arrived.

There are no specific accounts of healings given in these short verses but rather a summary of the healing work in this area. We may prefer the more personal accounts of healings, like Jesus touching the leper or speaking life into Jairus' daughter. But Mark gives us something different to consider here.

- Why do you think Jesus' healing power went out to those who merely *touched even the fringe of His garment*?

"Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen."

~ Hebrews 11:1

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Faith is a requirement for *following Jesus*. Only twice in Scripture did Jesus *marvel* at people's faith — the *lack of faith* in Nazareth (**Mark 6:6**), and the *great faith* of the centurion (**Luke 7:9**). Discuss honestly how Jesus might view your faith in this moment.
2. Jesus sent out His disciples two-by-two. Read **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** and discuss why this is a good model for many areas of life.
3. Share with your group a time when you had very few resources (like the loaves and fish) and yet God multiplied what you offered to Him in order to bless others.
4. How might you use what we studied in this chapter to encourage a friend who is currently *making headway painfully* in life?
5. Some who were healed by Jesus left His presence unchanged in spiritual ways. Is there some way that God has graciously blessed you, and yet you still desire to be the boss of your own life in that area?
6. What personal inspiration do you find in the story of the people who believed they merely needed to touch Jesus' garment to be healed?

Week Six — Mark 7:1 - 8:30

Day 1:

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For the first two days of our study this week we'll meet up with the Pharisees again and Jesus will confront them on their hypocritical leanings. It's so easy for us to meet these conversations and think, "Oh, those Pharisees! They just can't understand anything related to a genuine spiritual life! Glad I'm not like them."

I'm going to challenge us to study these passages understanding that there is a tiny little Pharisee living in each of our hearts, just waiting for the opportunity to be in charge of our lives.

READ Mark 7:1-13 — *Traditions and Commandments*

We get a sense that the scribes and Pharisees gathered around Jesus for one reason only — to find fault! So far they had confronted Him about eating with sinners, His lack of fasting, and His activities on the Sabbath.

- What fault did they find with Jesus and His disciples now? (v.2, 5)

- Briefly describe some of the traditions listed in v.3-4.

I'm sure you caught Mark's wording — Jesus was asked why His disciples didn't *walk according to the tradition of the elders*. The *hand washing tradition* in question was really a practice created by rabbis, added to the Law, and handed down through oral tradition.

Traditions had become so important that these people had lost sight of the heart of the matter. They grew comfortable exalting their thoughts and ideas and *traditions* above Scripture.

Jesus didn't waste any time calling them out. His words might seem a bit harsh to us, but I think we would speak pretty directly to people who were *stalking* us to find fault too.

Read **Isaiah 29:13-16**. This is the passage that Jesus quoted in His response to the religious leaders.

- How does this passage speak to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees?

Now, read it again with an eye toward your own heart.

- How does this passage speak to areas of your own life?

In case they needed a concrete example to understand His point, Jesus concluded by giving them one illustration of how they had ***rejected the commandment of God in order to establish their tradition.***

- What was the simple *law* that Jesus cited from **Mark 7:10**?

Yet, they had created their own rules that allowed people to take whatever resources they would have set aside to care for their family, dedicate it to God (meaning give it to the synagogue), and their responsibilities toward their parents were magically eliminated.

- How did this miss the mark of God's intention?

Day 2:

In the previous verses, Jesus had been speaking directly to the Pharisees. Now, staying on the same topic, He called the people around Him so He could instruct them on the *heart of the matter*.

Before we begin reading — look up a definition of the word *defile* in a dictionary and note it here:

READ Mark 7:14-23 — *What Defiles a Person*

The Pharisee's beef was with the disciples' lack of ceremonial hand-washing. They believed that unless contaminants were washed away in a prescribed manner, the person would be *defiled*. Jesus used a simple but clever contrast to explain the truth.

Fill in the blank lines from v.15

*There is nothing _____ a person that by going _____ him can **defile** him, but the things that _____ of a person are what **defile** him.*

Jesus was explaining that food and drink, no matter how it was consumed, had no power to *defile* a person since it was merely matter that would pass through the digestive system. But what originates *within* the person and *comes out* — that is what *defiles* him.

- List the examples of *defiling* actions or attitudes given in v.21-22.

- Read **Proverbs 4:23** and explain the significance of this one verse in light of Jesus' teaching in this passage.

Day 3:

We leave behind confrontation with the Pharisees now and move on to interesting stories of healings and miracles on both Gentile soil and within Israel.

READ Mark 7:24-30 — *A Gentile Woman's Faith*

We're not told *why* Jesus went all the way to the region of Tyre and Sidon, but it didn't seem that He went for ministry since He didn't want people to know He was there. Nonetheless...

- Who found Jesus in the home where He was staying? (v.25-26)
- What was her request of Jesus? (v.25-26)

Jesus was clearly in Gentile territory, He hadn't traveled there for ministry in the first place since His primary ministry was to the *lost sheep of Israel*. So Jesus responded to the woman by explaining the order of things. Here is a little chart that simplifies His comparison:

<u>Jews</u>	<u>Gentiles</u>
Children (privileged)	Little dogs (less privileged)
Fed first with bread	Got leftovers

- What was the woman's witty and faith-based response in v.28?

Interestingly, this is the only time in Mark's gospel that anyone called Jesus *Lord*. No wonder Jesus honored her faith. This is also the only account in Mark's gospel of Jesus healing from a distance.

- How does her faith inspire you?

Day 4:

READ Mark 8:1-10 — *Jesus Fed Four Thousand*

There are enough similarities between this passage and the previous feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6) that some people believe this to be a re-telling of the same event. However, read **Mark 8:18-21** and decide for yourself if they were one or two events.

We'll treat them as two events with very similar results.

- Fill in the chart below with as many comparisons and contrasts as you can find between the two times that Jesus multiplied food for a very large group.

Feeding of the Five Thousand
Mark 6:30-33

Feeding of the Four Thousand
Mark 8:1-10

After everyone had been fed both spiritually and physically, Jesus sent them away and once again got into a boat with His disciples where some important conversations would take place.

☞ READ Mark 8:11-21 — *The Leaven of the Pharisees*

We remember that Mark was often more concerned with themes rather than with chronology. **V.11-13** were probably inserted here to remind the reader of the skepticism of the Pharisees because Jesus would make that a point of conversation in the boat.

- What had the Pharisees demanded of Jesus?

It seems odd to us that the Pharisees would ask for a sign, since we've been reading, over and over, about Jesus healing the sick, producing miraculous bread, and raising the dead. But, Jesus had said that their eyes and ears were not open to seeing and hearing what was right in front of them.

However, He strove for better understanding from His followers.

- When Jesus cautioned the disciples about the *leaven of the Pharisees*, what did they think He was talking about?

When Jesus perceived their preoccupation with physical bread and lack of spiritual understanding, He asked them a series of questions centered on basics like body parts and functions.

- Fill in the chart below from **v.17-18**.

Are your hearts _____

Can your eyes not _____

Can your ears not _____

Can your mind not _____

Using such simple analogies seems a bit more like a conversation you might have with children. But honestly, don't we all think more simplistically before we are born-again? We're not so very different than the disciples.

Day 5:

☞ READ Mark 8:22-26 — *Jesus Healed a Blind Man*

Finally, the group had come to Bethsaida, which was their desired destination two chapters ago before the wind blew them elsewhere.

Now, a blind man was brought to Jesus. Isn't Mark ingenious in the way he bookends the conversation about '*having eyes that cannot see and ears that cannot hear*' with a narrative of the healing of a *deaf man* and the healing of a *blind man*?

- What were some of the details of the interaction between Jesus and the blind man in **v.23-25**?

This is the only recorded time that Jesus healed incrementally. I'm glad Mark wrote it because I think it speaks to us that God's healing *over time* is just as valid as instant healing — whether we're talking about physical restoration or spiritual understanding.

And that is what the next few verses show us — a gradual spiritual understanding, even among the disciples.

☞ READ Mark 8:27-30 — *Peter Confessed Jesus as the Christ*

- Who did some of the people say *Jesus was*? (**v.28**)

- What did Peter express about who Jesus was? (**v.29**)

- According to **Matthew 16:16-17** how did Peter come to this understanding?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. The Pharisees followed their own rules above honoring the heart of God's Law. In what ways might we honor *outward* religious traditions rather than honor God in our heart?
2. Why do you think it's often easier to simply follow rules and traditions rather than cultivate a heart-relationship with God?
3. The Gentile woman with the demon-possessed daughter was an *outsider*. Yet, her faith in Jesus' abundant power allowed her to ask for a miracle. How does this boldness apply to your life?
4. We shouldn't criticize the disciples too severely for thinking Jesus was talking about physical bread in the boat — our spiritual eyes and ears aren't always as sharp as they should be either. What seems to ground you to physical realities and distract you from spiritual realities? What can you do about it?
5. Share an experience that you've had where God has healed some area of your life incrementally rather than instantaneously.
6. Believing that Jesus is the Messiah truly is a revelation of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Share when you first believed that truth.

Week Seven — Mark 8:31-9:50

Day 1:

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Mark's gospel takes a decided turn at this point. We're halfway through our Bible study, approximately halfway through the gospel of Mark, and Peter's confession in the previous verses are used by Jesus to prepare His disciples for what lies ahead. These passages could be described as a handbook for *following Jesus*.

✞ READ Mark 8:31-33 — *Jesus Foretold His Path to the Cross*

Up to this point, there has been so much excitement and miracles and healings for those who have followed closely with Jesus. There were also parables, but now Jesus spoke to them *plainly* (v.32) with no room for misunderstanding.

- List the difficult things from v.31 that Jesus explained would lie ahead for him.

This must have seemed unbelievable since the Jews were expecting a Messiah who would overthrow Rome and establish a national kingdom. Peter was no exception, so he naturally thought he should *rebuke Jesus* for this talk of rejection, suffering, and death.

- Jesus turned the rebuke back on Peter by referring to him as whom? (v.33)

God's ways and God's kingdom will operate exactly as He has planned. We all tend to think things would go better with our plan and that is the underlying problem we share with Peter.

- In what area of your life have you recently believed you had a better plan than God?

📖 READ Mark 8:34-38 — *True Discipleship*

While still on the subject of *setting our minds on the things of God*, Jesus took the opportunity to invite both His disciples and anyone else who would follow Him to consider what it would mean.

- From **v.34** list the three requirements given to *follow Jesus*.

- How would you explain to someone what it means to *take up your cross*?

As Jesus foretold His rejection and death, the implication was that His followers would face similar experiences and be tempted to protect their lives.

- From **v.35-38** explain how Jesus was preparing them to think from an eternal perspective rather than an earthly perspective.

Assuming you are in this Bible study because you desire to *Follow Jesus*, in what ways are you intentionally *denying yourself* and *taking up your cross*?

Day 2:

🔗 READ Mark 9:1-13 — *The Transfiguration*

- What was Jesus' prophetic statement in **v.1**?

There is no explanation given as to what Jesus meant by those words, but the immediate context is *The Transfiguration* — an event that was not the ultimate display of God's kingdom, but certainly gave the disciples a firsthand preview of things to come.

- Who did Jesus take with Him to this *high mountain*? (**v.2**)
- Describe Jesus' appearance on the mountain. (**v.3**)
- Who appeared alongside Jesus? (**v.4**)

Scholars believe that Moses was a representation of the Law and Elijah represented the Prophets, thus capsulizing the Old Testament experience they were all familiar with. Hold onto this thought for a moment.

- In the meantime, what did Peter suggest as a good idea? (**v.5**)

Mark even narrated that Peter had no idea what to say, so he just started talking out of fear. But things were about to get even more intense. From **v.7**...

- What appeared visually and enveloped them?
- What sound did they hear?

Clouds and voices from heaven were a big part of Israel's history.

- ◇ God had both concealed and revealed himself in a cloud during the wilderness journey and at the dedication of the Tabernacle and the Temple.
 - ◇ God had spoken to His people with a voice from heaven to give them the Law and also at Jesus' baptism.
- Write out the message that was heard from **v.7**.

This was not only a confirmation that Jesus was the Messiah (as Peter had correctly identified); but, if Moses and Elijah were there to represent the entirety of the Old Testament, this statement also gave authority to Jesus, God's Son, over and above all previous revelation. Jesus had come to fulfill the Law and bring a New Covenant to any who would follow Him.

Suddenly the cloud dissipated, Moses and Elijah were gone and the experience was over. Can you imagine their conversation on the way down the mountain? I would have been afraid to speak. But the disciples had questions. One question was, if Jesus was the Messiah, didn't the scribes teach that Elijah must come first? Jesus answered their question.

- From **v.12-13**, but even more clearly from **Matthew 17:11-13**, what did Jesus explain to them?

Day 3:

✞ READ Mark 9:14-29 — *Jesus Healed a Boy with a Demon*

Peter, James, and John had just had a mountain-top experience with Jesus that was wonderful and inspiring. In our lives, *mountain-top* experiences, where we meet the glory of God in some way, can renew our ability to meet the challenges of daily life.

But, with every *mountain-top* experience there is always the matching action of *coming down the mountain*.

- From **v.14-18** describe the scene that Jesus and His disciples met once they descended the mountain.

- Specifically, what had the remaining nine disciples been doing in their absence? (**V.14**)

In the midst of the chaos, one man came to Jesus with his son who had been terrorized by a demon for quite some time.

- What had been his experience when he previously brought his son to the disciples? (**V.18**)

But that would not be his experience with Jesus!

First, Jesus gave a bit of a commentary on the current condition of the world. Then He invited the boy to come to Him, which caused the demon to put on a show using the boy's body.

Can you sense the utter fatigue in the father? He must have had to keep an eye on his son 24-7, lest the demon would destroy him by water or fire. We get the sense it was his exhaustion speaking as he said to Jesus, “...*if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.*” (V.22)

- What was Jesus’ response in v.23? Write it out word for word.

- What was the father’s reply to Jesus in v.24? Write it out word for word.

This exchange between Jesus and the father is one worth meditating on and applying to our lives! How often do we possess the complete measure of faith needed for a situation? How wise it is to confess our lack and ask God to give us what we need — more faith.

Jesus healed the boy, like He had done many times before, but it’s the final conversation with the disciples that I want us to focus on.

- From v.29 what was the reason Jesus gave that the disciples were unable to cast out the demon?

Note the disciples activity at the beginning of this lesson — *arguing with the scribes!* There is no mention of *praying* — only *arguing*. There are many things that can hinder *our* prayer life and getting entangled in things like *arguing* is only one. Daily tasks, hobbies, entertainment, the list of entanglements goes on. I’m certain there is an application for your life here, just like there is for mine.

"All things are possible for one who believes."

~ Mark 9:23

- Record Jesus' words from **v.35** here:

- Describe the simple object lesson from **v.36-37** that Jesus used to illustrate His words.

In this culture, children were insignificant *and* needy. Jesus was making the point that the path to greatness would be found in serving the least, those who were normally perceived to have little value.

For us, this is another important discipleship moment. Remember, the theme of this Bible study is *following Jesus*, so whenever we find such clear instructions, it's worth our time to ponder them.

Consider the following Scriptures and note what the Lord shows you:

Proverbs 19:17

Matthew 20:27-28

Philippians 2:4

1 Peter 4:10-11

Hebrews 6:10

Did you notice that Jesus mentioned *little ones* again in **v.42**? That verse handles like a final bookend to **v.36-41** where Jesus exhorted His followers about serving by using a child, someone with insignificant status, as an example of one to be served.

- Rather than the positive application of serving others, what is the warning given in **v.42**?

Jesus continued with further warnings related to the pull of sin that could keep one from eternal life. Not only is it important to not cause *others* to stumble, but it's important to remove what would cause *us* to stumble. So this section is more introspective.

- What types of sinful actions do you think the three body parts could represent?
 - The hand:
 - The foot:
 - The eye:

Fill in the blanks for the repetitive statement Jesus used after each illustration:

*"It is better for you to _____ crippled
than to be thrown into _____."*

We know from taking the Bible as a whole, that a sin does not cause us to lose our salvation. There are many passages that encourage us to confess our sins, repent, and be forgiven. Still, decisive action is often required in those areas that could draw a *follower of Jesus* deeper into holding onto this world and turning away from Christ. Think of it like cancer. Many cancers can be *cut out*. The process is grueling and leaves scars — but the patient's life is spared. That is the sense of these verses.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Discuss what it means to *lose your life for Christ's sake* as Jesus said in **Mark 8:35**.
2. Based on Jesus' teaching on true discipleship, in what ways should a Christian's life be different than a non-Christian's life?
3. Jesus told a father in our lesson, "*all things are possible for one who believes.*" Based on your study this week, how would you explain that statement to someone who asked?
4. Can you relate to the bruised ego of the disciples when someone else was successful in an area where they failed? What is really at the root of those feelings and what should be done with them?
5. Discuss practical ways in your life to model servanthood by being *a servant of all* (**Mark 9:35**).
6. Give an example of taking a drastic measure to keep ourselves from stumbling (like Jesus taught in **Mark 9:43-47**).

Week Eight — Mark 10:1-52

Chapter 10 turns an important corner in Mark's gospel. Ever since chapter 2 everything we've studied has taken place in the region of Galilee, or at least well north of the area of Jerusalem. Now, as Jesus approaches the cross, He and His disciples move down to Judea and ultimately to Jerusalem.

Day 1:

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READ Mark 10:1-12 — *Teaching About Divorce*

The Pharisees can be depended on to show up like clockwork when there is an opportunity for criticism or critique.

- What question did they pose to Jesus in v.2?

- Do you think they asked because they sincerely wanted clarity on the subject?

Jesus was currently in Herod Antipas' domain. John the Baptist had accused Herod of adultery — wrongfully taking his brother's wife. That statement had eventually gotten John killed. Do you suppose the Pharisees were stirring up the same topic in hopes that Jesus' answer would land Him the same fate?

Jesus was well-known (and admired) for answering the Pharisees questions with a question of His own.

- What was His return question in v.3?

Jesus did not argue with them or question the Law, but what He did was brilliant. He reminded them that the Law was given to sinful man

because of the complications of living in a sinful world that required some type of order. What Jesus did, however, was reach back to first principles — what was God’s original intention for marriage?

Jesus quoted from **Genesis 1:27** & **Genesis 2:24**

- What was God’s original design for genders?

- What was God’s original design for marriage?

Jesus added something additional in His conversation here that was not in the Genesis text.

- Write out **v.9**

The meaning is clear. The bond between a husband and wife isn’t merely a contract that can be renegotiated, but rather a covenant that turns two people into one.

The subject of divorce is a tender one. Everyone following this Bible study has been personally affected by divorce — at least somewhere in your family. Our purpose isn’t to resurrect feelings of guilt or grief, but to try our best to understand what Jesus was teaching.

One of the things we do see here is God’s gracious provision, as given through Moses, to protect the wife after divorce. But we shouldn’t make the same mistake as the religious leaders did and begin to believe that God somehow approved of it.

In many ways this conversation harkens back to a discipleship talk that Jesus had earlier — the matter of being a *servant of all*. Some of the Pharisees came to this topic wanting to protect a man’s right to divorce his wife. That is the opposite of what Jesus was teaching.

- Read **Exodus 20:2-17**. When Jesus told him to give away all of his belongings, which of the commandments do you think He was pointing out?

It's clear that selling all we have and giving it away to the poor is NOT our ticket to heaven. It was merely the specific prescription Jesus used to expose this man's heart. The man understood right away that his wealth was really his god, because he sadly walked away from Jesus — and that was the end of it.

Jesus wasn't done instructing those who remained, those who *had* given up everything to follow Him.

- What were the startling statements Jesus made about wealth in v.23-25?

Recently Jesus had taught that a person needed to enter the Kingdom as a little child — one who had complete reliance on someone larger than themselves. In contrast, those with wealth have usually developed a habit of relying on themselves and their riches.

We should be cautioned here because not one of us thinks we are *wealthy*. Yet, it is still easy for the possessions and money we *do have* to replace our dependence on God.

Here is a great summary on this topic from Warren Wiersbe:

Money is a marvelous servant but a terrible master. If you possess money, be grateful and use it for God's glory; but if money possesses you, beware! It is good to have the things money can buy, provided you don't lose the things that money cannot buy. ⁴

***"With man it is impossible, but not with God.
For all things are possible with God."***

~ Mark 10:27

Day 4:

🔗 READ Mark 10:28-34— *Looking for Rewards*

Peter always had a way of talking before he really knew what he was saying or why.

- What did he point out that he didn't want Jesus to overlook about their own sacrifice? (v.28)

Jesus must have smiled on the inside, but He didn't rebuke Peter. He actually reinforced what he had said. It was true that many would make sacrifices to *follow Jesus* but they would receive an abundance of blessings in return.

- In v.30, Jesus added one additional thing that someone should expect as they make sacrifices to *follow Jesus* — what is it?
- What about your life? Have you been called to make sacrifices in order to *follow Jesus*? What have they been?
- Have you experienced certain persecution? Explain.

Jesus seized the opportunity on the road to share for the third time what was ahead of Him on the path to the cross. Most of what he shared was similar to the two previous times, except that this time He added (in v.33) that He would be:

condemned by the _____ and then
delivered over to the _____ to be killed

But Jesus always added that He would rise in _____ days.

READ Mark 10:35-45— *True Servanthood*

These passages underscore just how much grace Jesus walked in as He traveled with His disciples. First, Peter wanted to make sure He noticed their sacrifices; now James and John were asking Jesus to not only notice them, but prepare a specific reward for them.

- What was James and John’s almost unbelievable request? (v.37)

What an understatement when Jesus said they *didn’t know what they were asking!* Jesus told them now three times what lay ahead for Him. He would undergo a baptism of suffering that He didn’t deserve, and drink a cup of judgment that did not belong to Him.

The disciples still didn’t understand. All they could picture was the opportunity to flank Jesus as His executive advisors.

- What did Jesus reveal about what lay ahead for them? (v.39)

- What do you think He meant by that?

Because their land was under Roman occupation, they were well aware how the ungodly *exercised authority over them*. So, He gave them *another* summary of how His *followers* should treat others.

- Summarize the message of *true servanthood* from v.43-45.

Day 5:

☞ READ Mark 10:46-52 — *Jesus Healed Blind Bartimaeus*

Jesus and His disciples had completed their journey all the way to Jericho, which was only about fifteen miles from Jerusalem. This is the last healing miracle that Mark recorded. I'm wondering if giving sight to this blind man may have been intended as a contrast to the blindness of the religious leaders in Jerusalem in the final chapters.

- Where did Jesus encounter Bartimaeus?

Bartimaeus addressed Jesus as the *Son of David*, which seemed to earn him the rebuke of the crowd, but grabbed the attention of the only one who mattered. Jesus had heard him, stopped, and called for him to come close.

- What did Jesus ask of Bartimaeus in **v.51**?
- How did Bartimaeus respond?

And the result was instant healing! Do you remember that the most recent experience with a blind man resulted in incremental healing? If we were to recap all of the healing requests and experiences that Mark gave us it would be an eclectic set. God cannot be contained by method, but there is one important element and it's given in Jesus' reply to this man.

- From **v.52** what was the important key in this healing?

"But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

~ Mark 10:31

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Jesus said (**Mark 10:14**), “*whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.*” Some groups believe that is a call for infant baptism. Discuss what you think of that based on the context of the passage studied.
2. Children generally live by faith. When they have a problem or an injury they run to their parent for help. In what ways do you want to be more *child-like* in your faith?
3. Share any insights the Lord has given you related to changes in how you view your possessions and wealth after studying the encounter with the rich young man.
4. Jesus taught frequently on what it was to be a servant, but His actions demonstrated it best. Discuss the example Jesus set for true servanthood and how we can be inspired to follow.
5. Read **Ephesians 6:7-8**. There will be times when God calls us to serve challenging people. How can this passage inspire you?
6. Jesus told Bartimaeus, “*your faith has made you well.*” What role does faith play in any of our healing experiences — whether physical, emotional, or spiritual?

Week Nine — Mark 11:1 - 12:34

Day 1:

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🔗 READ Mark 11:1-11 — *The Triumphal Entry*

We've reached one of the climaxes of Mark's story — Jesus entering Jerusalem — the Son of David entering the City of David, which God had chosen among all cities of Israel to place His name.

Mark spent a quarter of his gospel on the final week of Jesus' life and ministry which began on a Sunday with a *red carpet* experience and which ended very differently by Friday.

While they were yet a few miles away, near Bethany, Jesus asked two of His disciples to go on a mission.

- Describe the mission according to **v.2-3**.

- Read **Zechariah 9:9** and explain the prophetic link.

Not only was it important that Jesus entered Jerusalem on the colt of a donkey, but an unused colt was known to be especially suitable for sacred purposes.

For the LORD has chosen Jerusalem;
he has desired it for his home.
"This is my resting place forever," he said.
"I will live here, for this is the home I desired."
~ Psalm 132:13-14 (NLT)

Can you imagine the exhilaration of the disciples when they found the colt tied at the door just as Jesus had described? Even when queried by those nearby, they merely stated what Jesus had given them to say and all was well.

- Describe what people did to prepare the path for Jesus. (v.8)

- Describe what people shouted as Jesus rode past. (v.9-10)

It's important that we stop to consider the entire backdrop for this event. First, it was just days before the Passover celebration, when many Jews had gathered in Jerusalem to commemorate God's deliverance from their slavery in Egypt. Deliverance was on their minds so their cry of *Hosanna*, which literally means 'save now' or 'save us' was in keeping with the festival.

- Secondly, note whose kingdom was on their minds in v.10.

This was Jerusalem — the City of David — the great king whose everlasting throne was to bring forth the Messiah. Whether the crowds understood all the ins-and-outs of lineage, in that moment they were welcoming Jesus as the rightful heir to David's throne. For the first time, Jesus was openly affirming His kingship.

- Once inside Jerusalem, where did Jesus go and what did He do before retiring to Bethany?

Day 2:

🔗 READ Mark 11:12-19 — *The Fig Tree and the Temple*

Today's passage takes place 'on the following day' (v.12), which was Monday — the day following Jesus' grand entrance into Jerusalem. At first glance, the events in this passage would seem to be two completely isolated accounts — Jesus cursing a fig tree and Jesus cleansing the Temple. But with careful study, I think we'll find the common theme.

- What did Jesus find out about the fig tree once He got near it?

- What did He speak to the fig tree?

There is quite a bit going on behind the scenes that would help us understand these verses.

- ◇ First of all, in the Bible, a fig tree is often representative of Israel (**Hosea 9:10** and **Jeremiah 24**) so we need to hold that thought.
- ◇ The next thing to note is that a fig tree blossoms first, then the fruit grows while the leaves are budding. A tree full of leaves *should* send a signal that there would be abundant fruit.

Now consider what happened, from a distance, Jesus saw a tree that held the promise of fruit — but upon closer inspection was unfruitful. Compare that to Jesus' tour of the Temple the previous day. From a distance the activity in the Temple grounds held the promise of devotion to God — but upon closer inspection was unfruitful.

The fig tree was parading its leaves as if there were real fruit attached — the Temple activity was bustling as if there was real worship going on. Upon closer inspection both the tree and the Temple were unfruitful.

Jesus and His disciples came into Jerusalem and returned to the Temple area that He had closely inspected the afternoon prior. This was referred to as Herod's Temple. Since he wanted to leave a legacy through architecture, he had expanded the Temple grounds by doubling its size. He built, remodeled, and refurbished almost all parts of what was formally called Zerubbabel's Temple and the improvements were impressive.

- Describe the actions Jesus took in **v.15** when He arrived at the Temple?

The exchange of money, selling of pigeons and other sacrificial animals actually provided a necessary service for those who had travelled from a distance. That was not the problem. It was the greed and extortion under the surface that was detestable.

- Describe the actions Jesus took in **v.16**?

Again, carrying an object wasn't prohibited and wasn't the problem here. The problem was that the *Court of the Temple* had begun to resemble a bazaar or market street. People nonchalantly used it as a shortcut for their daily errands, as if the space was not set apart for anything of significance, but merely a business space.

Do you see how the closer inspection of both the fig tree and the temple held the same disappointment?

- Once the religious leaders saw Jesus' actions and heard His words (**v.17**), what was their decision as to their next move?

Day 3:

✞ READ Mark 11:20-25 — *A Lesson on Faith*

The heading in most Bibles for this section is “*The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree.*” These verses certainly have their beginning in that conversation-starter of the withered fig tree, but the real lesson in this passage is centered on faith, prayer, and forgiveness. Those are the things I want us to spend our time investigating.

- When Peter pointed out the withered fig tree, what four words did Jesus initially answer him with in **v.22**?

We can tell that Jesus was turning the conversation in a much more practical vein. Had the disciples caught the theme of unfruitfulness? Did Jesus sense they were concerned about looking good on the outside while not producing anything good from the inside?

We all face challenges to a life of faith. It’s easier-said-than-done to *have faith in God*. Challenges and problems in Scripture are often characterized as *mountains*.

- How did Jesus suggest they could deal with their own personal types of *mountains*?
- What are some requirements that Jesus gave for effective prayer in **v.23-24**?

Since they were on their way into Jerusalem, Jesus and the disciples were likely on or near the Mount of Olives, which would afford a view of the Dead Sea on a clear day. This could have been the very reason for such an organic object lesson. Can you picture Jesus’ words with a matching gesture that sent the Mount of Olives tumbling into the Dead Sea?

- What specific barrier might *you* be facing that prevents you from living a life of genuine fruitfulness for God?

Do you have *faith in God* that He will remove those mountains if you ask Him without doubting?

- What final qualification did Jesus tack onto this conversation in v.25?
- Why do you think that is an important part of praying with faith?

READ Mark 11:27-33 — *The Authority of Jesus Challenged*

When Jesus arrived at the Temple again, the leaders were waiting for Him with a challenge.

- What question did they ask Him?

Jesus used a rabbinical style of dialog that included answering their question with another question, which ultimately proved too much for them to handle!

I think what we love about this exchange is that Jesus proved His authority without saying the words!

Day 4:

☞ READ Mark 12:1-11 — *Parable of the Tenants*

This passage opens with the phrase, “*And he began to speak to them in parables.*” which gives us a hint that there was still a mixed group in His hearing — both His disciples *and* the religious leaders.

The content of this parable was reflective of situations that actually existed in Galilee during Jesus’ time. It was common for someone to own land and rent it out to others under a type of share-cropping arrangement.

Obviously, Jesus was using this hypothetical situation to drive home the point that ran parallel to His previous foretelling of His suffering and death.

We’re going to do something a little different today. I’ve left you a lot of space to just make your own observations and notes on the details of the parable and what Jesus meant by it.

Let’s start by identifying the people and places in the parable. Note who you think Jesus meant for them to represent:

The vineyard itself

The vineyard owner

The tenants

The servants

The son

As you focus on the vineyard owner himself,

- Describe the care that the owner put into cultivating and protecting his vineyard. (v.1)

- Describe the actions the owner took due to the unfaithfulness of the tenants. (v.9)

- What do you think Jesus meant when He said the owner would *give the vineyard to others*?

If the parable wasn't clear enough on its own, Jesus quoted from **Psalm 118:22-23** in order to connect the dots between the parable and His own mission on earth.

- Read **Matthew 21:43:44**. What additional information did Matthew record about this conversation?

- How does this theme relate to the *fig tree* and the *cleansing of the Temple*?

Day 5:

🔗 READ Mark 12:12-17 — *Paying Taxes to Caesar*

I purposefully connected the final verse from the *parable of the tenants* to this lesson. If we're to assume that Jesus had been talking to the *chief priests and the scribes and the elders* (**Mark 11:27**) all this time, then today's passage shows how they devised a way to broaden their support in *arresting* Him.

- What two groups of leaders now entered the scene with carefully crafted questions? (**v.13**)

Politically, these two groups were on the opposite end of the spectrum and were normally quite antagonistic to each other. Isn't it fascinating when factions unite merely because of a common foe?

Note the flattery in the preface to their question!

- What was their question to Jesus?

- What trap do you think they were hoping Jesus would stumble into?

- Write out Jesus' clever answer to them from **v.17**.

To the thoughtful listener, Jesus' simple yet profound answer highlighted the fact that both God and the government have a legitimate claim over each of us. We should give them both what is due them.

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Discuss your initial reaction to the cursing of the fig tree. How is it different than Jesus' other miracles?
2. Jesus cursed a fig tree that looked attractive from a distance, but upon closer inspection had NO fruit. In what areas might you try to keep up appearances from a distance without real substance?
3. What do you think the relationship is between faith in God and forgiving others, as Jesus taught?
4. If a coin can be recognized as belonging to Caesar by the image it bears, how can we recognize what belongs to God?
5. What is today's application of Jesus' statement, '*Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God*'?
6. In **Mark 12:25** Jesus said those who rise are *like angels in heaven*. We know that people don't become angels (even though that can be a sentimental belief). What did Jesus mean when He said that?

Week Ten — Mark 12:28 - 13:37

Day 1:

✞ READ Mark 12:28-44 — *The Main Thing and the Main Person*

Paul and I often recite a saying that I'm sure you've heard before, "keep the main thing the main thing." Today's passage begins with a scribe asking Jesus that basic question, "what is the main thing in life?"

- Actually, how did the scribe word his question in v.28?

Jesus answered the scribe by reciting part of the most basic creed of Judaism called the *Shema*. The Shema itself is actually a lovely grouping of words that describes the type of intimate relationship that God always desired between His children and Himself.

Here are some thoughts to contemplate:

- What does it mean to *love God with all your heart and all your soul*? How are they different from each other?
- What does it mean to *love God with all your mind*?
- What does it mean to *love God with all your strength*?

Shema ('hear') is the Hebrew word that begins the most important prayer in Judaism. It is found in Deuteronomy 6:4, which begins with the command to 'hear.' The whole Shema prayer, which includes verses 4-9, is spoken daily in the Jewish tradition.⁵

- Jesus added what He saw as the second greatest command which originated from **Leviticus 19:18**. Write Jesus' response here (from **v.31**).

We've grown so accustomed to people asking Jesus trick questions in order to trap Him, that it's almost shocking when someone agrees with Jesus and actually commends Him on His answer.

- What did Jesus say about this particular man?

Then Jesus took the stage in **v.35-37** to ask His own question. It was the line of David that was on His mind and He asked the religious leaders, almost in riddle form, '*How can the Messiah be both the son of David and David's Lord at the same time?*' They were stumped and it seems that the crowd enjoyed that.

- What type of warning did Jesus issue about certain scribes?

Almost by way of example, Jesus sat down near what we would call the *offering box*.

- As He observed all the people, describe who caught His attention and why.

- How was this widow's giving a complete contrast to what had been mentioned before.

Day 2:

✞ READ Mark 13:1-13 — *The Temple and the End of the Age*

All of chapter 13 follows one theme — *Jesus preparing His followers for future events.*

The conversation began on a walk from the Temple to the Mount of Olives. One of His disciples pointed out the magnificence of the Temple with its cut stones and pillars. It *was* an architectural feast for the eyes. So, Jesus used that comment as a teaching moment.

- What did He say would happen to the Temple buildings?

Naturally, that got everyone's attention, but it was Peter, James, John, and Andrew, while seated with Jesus on the Mount of Olives, that followed up with Him as to *when* these things would happen and *what signs* they could expect.

Jesus' main purpose wasn't to satisfy their curiosity about the future as much as to prepare them (and us) in practical ways to live and thrive in a world that would be hostile to God's Kingdom.

- What was Jesus' main point in **v.5-8**?

Then Jesus spoke to their inquiries about *signs*. Before we identify the signs, we need to understand that He mentioned two types of signs:

- ◇ *Age-long signs* — which are things we can expect to see over the entire church age.
- ◇ *Age-end signs* — which are things we can expect to see just before the end of the church age.

In the remainder of today's verses, Jesus confined His comments to *age-long* signs.

- From **v.7-8** what are the specific *age-long* signs that Jesus said would take place before the end of the church age?

- In what ways have you noted these signs in history or in your own lifetime?

- From **v.9-10** what are the two specific *age-long* signs? (Hint: one sign is in **v.9** and the other in **v.10**.)

Clearly, the persecution that Jesus' disciples would face would be uniquely different than what other believers would experience over the course of history. Not everyone experiences the same brand of persecution. However, the reality of persecution of God's people *is* an *age-long* sign.

- There is one final *age-long* sign in **v.12-13**. How would you describe it?

Again, not everyone experiences the same form of family division, but when people come to Christ, there can exist hostility between family members.

- How has this been an experience for you?

Day 3:

🔗 READ Mark 13:14-23 — *The Abomination of Desolation*

In today's verses, Jesus explained the second category of signs — *age-end signs*. Yesterday we identified *age-end signs* as those events we could expect to see just prior to the close of the church age. But in the same way that many Old Testament prophecies carry a *dual fulfillment* — one event that meets the criteria in the near term, along with a greater event that meets the criteria at the end of the age — so too these signs also carry a dual fulfillment.

- What is described as an *age-ending sign* in the first part of **v.14**?

Okay, that is *the sign*. Now we want to investigate where that phrase came from in the Old Testament Scripture, how Jesus described its near-fulfillment, and how He described its greater fulfillment.

First, read **Daniel 12:11** to find out how this phrase would have been familiar to the disciples.

Next, what would be the near fulfillment? The Jews already thought they had experienced this in 167BC when the Syrian king, Antiochus IV offered profane sacrifices in the Temple. But Jesus seems to use it here to describe *another* near fulfillment yet to come.

- Who is specifically being spoken to in **v.14**?

- Describe the haste with which they will need to make an escape.

This prediction was still in the future for the disciples, but for us (the reader) history records the Roman occupation and subsequent fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 which was also a time when the sign of the *abomination of desolation* was in place, a time when many in Judea (near Jerusalem) had to flee for their lives.

Lastly, what will be the greater fulfillment of this sign?

- What is the time stamp in the beginning of **v.19**?
- What is the event that is named? (**v.19**)
- How is this event described? (**v.19-20**)

Clearly, Jesus' wording points us to something that neither we nor the disciples, nor anyone on earth has yet experienced — the tribulation period — which is an *age-end sign*.

A huge part of Jesus' teaching was related to warning His *followers*. Some of the first words out of His mouth in **v.5-6** were, **“See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray.”** We see the same warning here in **v.21-23**.

- How have false christs and false prophets been something to avoid in your own lifetime?

Day 4:

🌀 READ Mark 13:24-27 — *The Coming of the Son of Man*

In the previous two days, we studied verses that spoke of both the destruction of Jerusalem *and* the end of the church age. But today's passages speak only of the end time events.

- Describe the great celestial disturbances that will take place *after that tribulation*.

- Who will be made visible at the end of that time?

This is what we refer to as the **Second Coming of Jesus Christ**. We know from **Zechariah 14:3-4** that Jesus will make His return to the Mount of Olives. Isn't it fascinating that Jesus and His disciples were sitting right there on the Mount of Olives as He was telling them of all these things to come?

Another note: since He will have already raptured His Church before this point, the *elect* spoken of in **v.27** would be the tribulation saints — those who came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ during the tribulation.

🌀 READ Mark 13:28-31 — *The Lesson of the Fig Tree*

Hearing about the cataclysmic events and the great difficulties of the tribulation could certainly cause anxiety. So Jesus added the lesson of the fig tree to help quell those anxious feelings.

Many of the trees near Jerusalem were evergreen, but the fig was one that had a predictable annual life cycle. A reasonable parallel for our area might be a maple tree. We could legitimately say, "As soon

as the maple leaves turn orange and fall from the tree, you know that Thanksgiving is right around the corner.

- What season was obviously right around the corner when the fig tree put out its leaves?
- Jesus was teaching that when a person witnessed these *age-end* signs — what would be near?

And he tagged on a statement of great comfort for us in **v.31**. We have many uncertainties in life, but if our life is hidden away with Christ, we can count on His Word always.

- Write out **v.31** below.

READ Mark 13:32-37 — *Stay Awake!*

Even though we can watch for the *signs*, the exact day or hour is a mystery to us. Therefore, it's imperative that we *keep awake*.

- Count the number of times Jesus exhorted His *followers* to stay awake in these final verses: _____
- What, exactly, are we to be watchful for?
- Why is it in our best interest to not get distracted but to be ready for Jesus' return?

Day 5:

We're going to finish up our study this week by peeking into the opening verses of chapter 14. Here Mark narrates a few final events that will bring us right up to the Passover that Jesus shared with His disciples.

What we're going to be looking for in these verses is *opportunity*. People have agendas for good and bad, and they often look for opportunities to carry out those agendas. I can't help but think Mark wanted us to discover these three sets of opportunists within these eleven verses and contemplate the lengths they were willing to go to in order to accomplish their purpose.

READ Mark 14:1-11 — *Opportunities Surrounding Jesus*

- In **v.1-2**, who did Mark draw our attention to and what opportunities related to Jesus were they seeking?

- When did they *not* want to arrest Jesus and why?

The last thing the religious leaders needed was to capture the attention of the Romans — so their mission needed to be carried out with stealth.

- In **v.3** who did Mark draw our attention to and what opportunity related to Jesus was she seeking?

- Who was opposed to her actions and why? (v.4-5)
- In what ways did Jesus defend what she had done? (v.6-9)

Mark didn't identify the woman, but John told us she was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (**John 12:1-8**) There is no indication Mary knew she was *anointing Jesus' body before His burial*. She merely sought an opportunity to lavishly express her love and devotion. This was accomplished to such a degree that Jesus prophesied we would be reading about her actions even to our day!

- Finally, in **v.10-11** who did Mark draw our attention to and what opportunities related to Jesus was he seeking?

And so, realizing they both had the same agenda, Judas Iscariot and the religious leaders became partners.

I'll just leave us with a couple of questions to ponder for this week.

- ◇ Where do I find myself in this story?
- ◇ What opportunity am I seeking related to Jesus?
- ◇ What lengths will I go to in order to accomplish my purpose?

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. What are some reasons that we struggle to love our neighbor as ourselves?
2. What do you think made the widows' very small contribution at the Temple greater in Jesus' eyes than people giving larger amounts of money?
3. Read **Mark 13:10**. Jesus said this must be accomplished before the Second Coming of Christ. What is our personal role in that happening?
4. Why do you think God has chosen not to reveal to us exactly when Jesus will return?
5. What are some things that steal our attention and cause us to not *stay awake* in anticipation of Jesus' return?
6. How would you have reacted when the woman poured the expensive perfume on Jesus? Would your response have been more like hers or more like the disciples and why?

The original instructions for the Passover meal would have required everyone to be standing with their cloaks tucked in, commemorating a readiness for escape like the original Passover night. However, by this point in history, the celebration had morphed into a more relaxed affair and most people enjoyed their time with their family, reclining around a table.

- Suddenly, Jesus broke the festive tone of the evening with what almost unbelievable statement? (v.18)

- What was the reaction of the disciples?

Jesus' words and actions that night was the beginning of what we, in the church today, call *communion*. We observe communion with bread and wine because that was how Jesus instructed His *followers* that evening with the new symbolism of the Passover elements.

- The bread, rather than representing the suffering and affliction of the Hebrews in Egypt would now represent what? (v.22)

- The cup of wine, would now be a symbol of what under the New Covenant? (v.24)

Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

~Psalm 41:9

Day 2:

After Jesus shared about a betrayer in their midst, the mood of the disciples had to have been somber. But **v.26** tells us they completed the Passover traditions by singing a hymn together.

This was likely what the Jews called the *Great Hallel* which brought the Passover celebration to a conclusion. You might want to pause here and read **Psalm 136** in your Bible to get a feel for how this must have renewed their spirits.

🔗 READ Mark 14:26-42 — Gethsemane

Once they arrived at the Mount of Olives, Jesus shared two things that would soon happen.

- What was the negative thing from **v.27**? (which had also been prophesied in **Zechariah 13:7**)

- What was the positive thing from **v.28**?

Did you notice that none of them seemed to pay any attention to the positive thing to soon happen? Peter especially seem to fixate on what Jesus said about them *falling away*.

- How did Peter contradict what Jesus said in **v.29**?

- What did Jesus say to drive home the point that it certainly *would* happen and happen very soon?

Peter's response in **v.31** reminds us about his dominant personality. When he declared things, he was usually speaking aloud what others were thinking, as evidenced by the phrase, "*And they all said the same.*"

- Describe how Jesus ultimately separated the disciples and Himself into three groups in **v.32-35**.

- While Jesus was praying alone, what did He pray? (**v.36**)

It's impossible for us to understand the tremendous agony with which Jesus prayed. He knew He would soon be abandoned by every one of His friends, have to endure physical torture, and most of all experience a separation from His Father, which He had never known.

- As He was facing the greatest trial of His life, how did He find His disciples when He returned to the three?

- Even though all three were asleep, why do you think it may have been that Jesus spoke directly to Peter?

What connections can you draw between the disciples' inability to stay awake in Gethsemane and Jesus' earlier warnings (in chapter 13) to "*stay awake.*"

Day 3:

☞ READ Mark 14:43-52 — *Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus*

- Who all arrived on the scene while Jesus was still speaking to His disciples in the garden? (v.43)

- What was the pre-arranged signal that Judas used to identify Jesus? (v.44-45)

- Read **Luke 22:48**. According to this verse, how did Jesus respond to Judas?

The soldiers began to lay hands on Jesus, but ‘*one of those who stood by*’ drew a sword and began to wield it!

- Read **John 18:10**. Who was that certain *someone*?

In fact, let’s read all of the gospel accounts of this treacherous night and note any details you find in each one:

- **Matthew 26:49-56**

*Faithful are the wounds of a friend;
profuse are the kisses of an enemy.*

~ Proverbs 27:6

- Luke 22:47-53

- John 18:10-11

Isn't it interesting that Doctor Luke is the only one who gave the specific information about Jesus healing the servant's ear? I just love that Jesus would not leave without that man being made whole.

Then Jesus pointed out the ridiculousness of coming to arrest Him in a remote garden under cover of darkness, as if He were a thief. Day after day He had been among them on the streets or in the Temple, but this moment was chosen for a reason — because deeds of darkness *love* darkness. Plus the daytime crowds *loved* Jesus and an arrest among His *followers* would have been much more challenging.

- Except, what does **v.50** tell us about the sad condition of this small group of *followers* that were with Him?

- Finally, Mark reveals an odd bit of information about one such follower and how he fled — without what? (**v.52**)

Many scholars think this was John Mark himself (the writer of the gospel of Mark)

Day 4:

✞ READ Mark 14:53-64 — *Jesus Before the Council*

- According to v.53, to whom was Jesus led after the arrest in the garden?
- During this same time, where was Peter and what was he doing? (v.54)

The fact that this *trial* was held at the high priest's home seems highly irregular. **Matthew 26:57** tells us the name of the High Priest was Caiaphas. It also seems odd that there were *guards* in his courtyard. But this all adds up to the fact that this was not a *real or fair* trial, neither was it held in the proper location at the proper time.

- What was the council trying to gather that would help condemn Jesus to death? (v.55)
- What problems were they running into that caused them to be unsuccessful? (v.55-59)

Adding to the absurdity of it all, the *witnesses* seemed to have been pre-arranged since they were all readily available in the middle of the night and asked no questions as to why all laws regarding trials were being broken.

Day 5:

☞ READ Mark 14:66-72 — *Peter Denied Jesus*

We have to remember at this point that Jesus was being *tried* in a court that pretended to follow Old Testament laws. Except, we see that they were quite selective about which Laws they would follow. For example, the crime and conviction here at the high priest's home seemed to be *blasphemy*. But the interesting thing is that **Leviticus 24:16** laid out a method of punishment for a *blasphemer*. He was to be stoned. But Jesus was delivered to Pilate instead.

Re-read **Mark 10:33-34**.

- How did the events this night reflect exactly what Jesus said would happen.

For Jesus, the spitting, striking and mockery was just the beginning of what would take place in this 24-hour period. For Peter, the reality of his true-self was also just the beginning — the beginning of something God would do in his life that would bring great glory to God.

- In **v.66-67**, who was the first person to recognize Peter as being a *follower of Jesus*?

- What was Peter's response?

Peter had made a pretty big splash in the garden by waving his sword around and even cutting off an ear. It's not like he had kept a low-profile. And this servant girl seems to be the kind that *never forgets a face*. So, she started in again to link Peter to Jesus, but this time she began to tell people around her.

- What did she say? (v.69)

- What was Peter's response?

Finally, those bystanders got a little better look at him and maybe even detected his Galilean accent.

- What did they say? (v.70)

- What was Peter's response?

Then the dreaded sound came — the rooster crowed a second time and Peter remembered.

- What additional information do we find in **Luke 22:60-61** about this moment?

It would be one level of grief for a person to realize their lack of loyalty and courage — but an entirely different level to fix a gaze with Jesus and see the sadness and disappointment in His eyes along with the bruises already forming around them. This was a night that changed Peter forever!

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Share how studying the last Passover that Jesus shared with His disciples has brought more meaning to communion for you.
2. In **Mark 14:36**, Jesus addressed His Father in Heaven with the word *Abba*, which is like us saying *Daddy* or *Pappa*. Obviously, it came out of His mouth easily. Do you find it easy to think of your Heavenly Father like a Daddy and even to start a prayer that way?
3. In that same verse, Jesus asked that *this cup be removed*. But it wasn't. What lesson do you learn about prayer through Jesus' experience in the garden?
4. The disciples had a tough time in the garden staying awake so they could pray. We still need to *watch and pray* in our lives. Read **Ephesians 6:18** and discuss how we can obey this verse.
5. At Jesus' trial, the false witnesses were undoubtedly saying untrue things, yet when the high priest asked Jesus what He had to say for Himself, He remained silent. Do you think there is any application for similar situations in our lives?
6. In what ways might you be tempted to respond in a similar way that Peter did in the courtyard? Why?

Week Twelve — Mark 15:1 - 16:20

Day 1:

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✞ READ Mark 15:1-20 — *Jesus Delivered to Pilate*

We have so much ground to cover in this final week of our study. We'll start, on Day One, with Jesus being handed over to the Gentiles (as He foretold), and we'll end, on Day Five, with Jesus leaving for Heaven!

We left last week's lesson with the rooster signaling that it was morning and a shared gaze between Peter and Jesus as he was being led out of the high priest's home. They were delivering Him over to the Gentiles by taking Him to the Roman Governor of Judea whose name was Pilate.

- What question did Pilate ask of Jesus in **v.2**?

- What was Jesus' answer?

In Pilate's court, Jesus was not being charged with blasphemy. The Romans would have cared nothing of a religious matter. The charge was treason — that Jesus had declared himself to be the king over the Jews by the way He rode into Jerusalem a few days earlier.

The chief priests brought other accusations, but Pilate watched Jesus and was amazed at His composure, as He remained silent.

- What habit had Pilate developed to stay in favor with the Jews during the Feast of Passover as described in **v.6**?

- Who were the choices that Pilate put before the people for release that year? (**v.7,9**)

- Why was it that the crowd favored the release of Barabbas over Jesus? (v.11)

We can develop a little sympathy for Pilate in this mess — he really wanted to find a way to release Jesus. Plus **Matthew 27:19** tells us that his wife had a dream and sent word to Pilate to have nothing to do with *that innocent man*.

- As a last-ditch effort, looking for some alternative, what did Pilate ask of the crowd in v.12?

But this crowd had now turned into a mob and they would not be satisfied with anything but crucifixion, which is almost unimaginable that a group of Jews would demand punishment by the Romans, in Roman style for one of their own countrymen.

Read **John 19:1-7**. Mark's gospel uses the word '*scourge*', but it's the same thing. Flogging wasn't a normal precursor to crucifixion, so we wonder if Pilate was hoping for *one more out* by presenting Jesus after a flogging when he said, "*Behold the man.*" But the chief priests and officers only cried, "*Crucify him.*"

- List the events from v.16-19 that Jesus endured by the hands of the Roman soldiers.

Day 2:

✞ READ Mark 15:21-39 — *The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus*

Not all of the gospels tell all of the events of Jesus' final days. Our goal here is not to gather every detail from each gospel, but to study what Mark chose to include in *his* gospel.

It was normal for a man to carry his own cross to his execution. But few were first flogged. If they were, most did not live past the flogging. Since the route from Pilate's palace to Golgotha was roughly a half mile, in His diminished state, Jesus got to a point that he could no longer carry the heavy wooden cross. Either someone else would have to carry it, or the execution would not happen.

- Who was recruited to carry Jesus' cross?
- Once Jesus had arrived at the site of the execution, what was He offered? (v.23)

And then Mark simply wrote, '*they crucified him,*' which is a stark economy of words for such a hideous and torturous event.

Read **Psalm 22:18** and explain how this was fulfilled at the crucifixion.

Mark records exact timestamps for us in this passage — third, sixth and ninth hour. Jewish time began at roughly 6am, so the *third hour* would be 9am and so forth.

Using these timestamps as headers, list what took place during each time period:

- The **third hour**:

- The **sixth hour**:
- The **ninth hour**:
- What was the inscription that had been hung on Jesus' cross? (v.26)

Mark details the words of two interesting groups of people at the foot of the cross — the Jewish chief priests and scribes (v.31-32) and a Roman centurion. (v.39)

- Compare their remarks and note your thoughts.
- Why do you think Jesus said, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"
- What unusual event happened inside the Temple after the 9th hour? (v.38)
- Read **Hebrews 9:1-14**, and explain the symbolism of this event.

Day 3:

✞ READ Mark 15:40-47 — *Jesus Buried*

Mark rarely included the names of women in his narrative, but starting with **v.40** the women seem to take center stage, right through Jesus' resurrection.

- List the three women in **v.40**, who Mark identified as watching the crucifixion from a distance.

- What history does Mark tell us about these women? (**v.41**)

Preparation Day is a term used for the day before either a festival (like Passover) or a weekly Sabbath. In **v.42**, it is identified as a preparation for the Sabbath. This is noteworthy because all things grind to a halt when the sun sets on *preparation day*. If Jesus was to have anything resembling a proper burial, time was of the essence.

- Who approached Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus? (**v.43**)
- What are your thoughts about his boldness to do this?

- What surprised Pilate when Joseph asked for the body of Jesus?
- Why do you think he sent a centurion to the cross of Jesus to confirm that He was actually dead?

Jesus' body was then taken down from the cross, likely washed and hurriedly prepared for burial and laid in a tomb.

- Read **Matthew 27:60**. To whom did this tomb belong?
- How was the tomb sealed? (**v.46**)

The location of the tomb was in a garden very near the site of the Crucifixion (John 19:41). Archaeological excavation has shown that the traditional site of the burial of Jesus was a cemetery during the first century AD. Tombs cut out of the rock were closed by rolling a stone against the entrance. This could be either a flat stone disc that rolled in a sloped channel or simply a large rock that could be rolled in front of the opening.⁶

There were two women who witnessed both the crucifixion *and* the burial location and Mark mentions them in **v.47**. Who were they?

This is important information in preparation for the next chapter because we know how they could identify the specific tomb in which Jesus was laid.

Day 4:

🔗 READ Mark 16:1-8 — *The Resurrection*

The climax of Mark's gospel starts right here! Without the resurrection, all of the healings, prophecies, and wise words of Jesus would simply wither and become mere legend. The resurrection is the ultimate proof that Jesus is indeed who He claimed to be — the Son of God — the Messiah.

- According to **v.1**, name the women who approached the tomb the morning after the Sabbath.

- What was their purpose? (**v.1**)

- What was their problem? (**v.3**)

- How had their problem been solved for them? (**v.4**)

Mark doesn't say exactly *how* the stone had been rolled back from the entrance to the tomb (although Matthew does), but the implication from **v.5** is that the young man dressed in white must have cleared the way for the women.

From v.6, what words did the angel speak...

- ...that would calm the women?

- ...that would identify whom they sought?

- ...that would give them news of hope?

The angel told the women to go share some information with the disciples **and** with Peter.

- What was the location where they were to meet Jesus?

- Why do you think Peter may have been singled out?

In these eight verses, Mark only recorded the signs of resurrection and the testimony of the angels, but the final verses in tomorrow's study will give us more details about Jesus' personal appearances.

**The women became the first messengers
of the wonderful Resurrection message**

Day 5:

☞ READ Mark 16:9-20 — *The Great Commission*

We have a more unique ending to the gospel of Mark in our English Bibles than the other gospels. Most of our Bibles have an insertion here that “*some of the earliest manuscripts do not contain v.9-20.*” But since the verses are given us in our Bibles, we’ll go ahead and include them in our study.

These verses contain *some* but not all of Jesus’ personal appearances after His resurrection.

- From **v.9**, who did Jesus single out for a private appearance?

- When Mary went to share her news with the disciples, what was their reaction?

Jesus also personally appeared to the other women on their way to tell the disciples (**Matthew 28:9-10**). I feel that the women all had an advantage on that morning since they had not only been *told* that Jesus was alive (by an angel), but they personally experienced His presence. In all fairness to the disciples, they were still at the *having only been told* phase.

This passage seems to highlight the unbelief of the disciples. Even when Jesus appeared to them, (**v.14**) He rebuked them for not believing the report about Him.

But, there was work to be done now and Jesus had an important message to convey. Actually Jesus gave several *commissions* to His *followers*. Since our theme has been *following Jesus* it would be a wonderful final exercise to look up each of these *commissions* and note what the Holy Spirit shows you for your own life.

Matthew 28:18–20

Luke 24:47–49

John 20:21

John 21:15–17

Acts 1:4–8

- Which one of the above do you feel most closely resembles what is recorded here in **Mark 16:15-16**?
- Which aspects of these *commissions* speak most directly to you and your season of life?

What we call **The Ascension**, Mark simply describes as Jesus being “*taken up into heaven.*” That is where He is now, *seated at the right hand of the Father* — interceding for us and enabling us to continue to do the work that He modeled.

Thank you for joining us on this journey through Mark. I’m confident that God has honored your time and commitment to *follow Him*.

My Blessings to you,

Sue

Questions for Thought & Discussion

1. Read **Exodus 10:22-23** which is an account of the ninth plague in Egypt and which led up to their first Passover. Discuss any parallel you see between this darkness and what was experienced the day Jesus was on the cross.
2. What would you say to someone who said that Jesus was simply murdered by the Romans? What Scripture would you use?
3. Mark noted the faithfulness of the women to be the last to leave the cross on Friday and the first to be at the tomb on Sunday. Discuss how this inspires you toward faithfulness.
4. The women who saw Jesus were given a *message* — He is risen; and a *ministry* — to tell others. How does that translate into our own calling from the Lord?
5. Share how the Lord has inspired you and equipped you to more closely *follow Jesus* through your study of the book of Mark.

*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

~ Mark 10:45

REFERENCES

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Women of the Word Bible Studies

The following WOW Bible Studies written by Sue LeBoutillier are available through the **Calvary Chapel Ontario bookstore**, and through our online store at **www.ccontario.com**.

- **Genesis**— Divine Design, From Eden to Egypt
- **Exodus** — Divine Deliverance, From Egypt to Sinai
- **Numbers** —The Wilderness Way, From Sinai to the Jordan
- **Joshua** —The Path of Promise, From the Jordan into Canaan
- **Judges** — A Time of Turning
- **Ruth** — Walking with My Redeemer
- **1 Samuel** — The Coming King
- **2 Samuel** — The Reigning King
- **1&2 Kings (Part One)** — Solomon and the House of the Lord
- **1&2 Kings (Part Two)** — Learning from Leaders
- **Esther** — God’s Hidden Work from the Shadows
- **Jonah** —The Call of Compassion
- **The Way of Jesus** — The Sermon on the Mount from Matthew
- **Mark**— Following Jesus
- **Simply Jesus** — The “I AMs” of Christ in the Gospel of John
- **Acts** — Walking in the Spirit, The First Days of the Last Days
- **Galatians** — Finding Grace in a Demanding World
- **Ephesians** — Finding Purpose in a Confused World
- **Philippians** — Finding Joy in a Disjointed World
- **Colossians** — Finding Stability in a Changing World
- **Titus** — While We Wait
- **James** — Real Faith for Daily Life
- **1&2 Peter** — Hope, Holiness and Humility in a Hostile World
- **1,2,3 John** — Light, Love and Logic, Lessons from the Apostle John

