



From the Friend of a Friend

The Book of Mark

FOLLOWER

THE SEVEN MARKS OF A DISCIPLES



LOVE RADICALLY



WORSHIP PASSIONATELY



ENGAGE SCRIPTURE



PRAY FERVENTLY



SERVE JOYFULLY



GIVE GENEROUSLY



MAKE DISCIPLES

Dear Mountaintop Church Family,

We are about to go on a journey to know and follow Jesus more deeply, and I'm thrilled we're going together. Pursuing a deeper understanding of the life and ministry of Jesus is one of the most important things a follower of Christ can do, and a great place to start is the Gospels. That's what we call the four accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus. They are named after their authors: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. This year (2023) is the second part in a series of digging into each Gospel, and we'll be studying Mark.

The heart of this series is to find each Gospel writers' unique perspective. All four gospels share some similarities in the stories they tell about Jesus. Of course, the crucifixion and resurrection are the culmination of each perspective. However, in this series we'll be digging into stories, miracles, and teachings that are only recorded in each unique Gospel. Why did only that author share the message? What was the Holy Spirit doing in them to make sure people heard that story for centuries to come? And for us...what is God trying to say to us?

My prayer is that over the next four years, we'll have all read through the Gospels in their entirety. In our final and fifth year of this series, we'll compare some of the stories that are in multiple Gospels to understand why these were such pivotal moments in the life of Jesus. As we study together, may we come to know our Savior in a more intimate way.

2022 - Jesus: An Eyewitness Account (Matthew - Learn more at www.mountaintopchurch.com/watch)

2023 - Jesus: From the Friend of a Friend (Mark)

2024 - Jesus: A Research Project (Luke)

2025 - Jesus: The Storyteller (John)

2026 - Jesus: The Crossovers

I can't wait to see what God does in us as we study His Word together.

In Christ,



Carter McInnis
Lead Pastor

FREE RESOURCES

PAPER BIBLE

If you do not have a Bible, please feel free to take one as you enter or leave the Mountaintop Church auditorium. It is our gift to you.

DIGITAL BIBLE

You can take the Bible with you wherever you go with these websites and free apps for your phone or tablet.



Bible.com
BibleGateway.com



You'll find a kid's Bible available at:
BibleAppForKids.com



More in-depth Study:
Easily search commentaries and translations
BlueLetterBible.org



Olive Tree Bible Software
OliveTree.com

SUNDAY MESSAGES

Every Sunday morning message is recorded on the Mountaintop Website. So, if you miss a message or want to share one with a friend, to go Mountaintopchurch.com/watch to view messages on-demand.

JESUS

Volume 2: From The Friend Of A Friend

How to use this booklet:

This is the second volume in a 5-issue series. What lies ahead is the perspective of Mark. The pages ahead unfold the life events of our main character, Jesus.

This is the second part of a much wider story, spanning five years and four unique authors, to tell one incredible story; all with the purpose of giving us more glimpses of the man at the center of it all: JESUS.

This particular volume is designed to be your companion on a four-week journey through the second gospel. Each week begins with the verses included in that week's Sunday morning message, along with a place to take notes on the teaching.

The following pages outline a series of readings spread out over four days. Read these passages through the week, along with the short devotional included.

Engage with the scripture and reflect on what impact it might have on your life. After all, you aren't just a reader. The Bible has a life of its own and it beckons you in. Let the Bible study you too.

You are a character in the story that unfolds. You have a role to play. So let's jump in...

Intro to Mark:

The Gospel of Mark is the shortest and, most likely, oldest of all the Gospels. Mark's Gospel is straight and to the point. He doesn't have a birth narrative/origin story like Matthew, Luke, and John. We pick up when Jesus is an adult beginning ministry.

Most scholars believe Matthew and Luke were familiar with Mark's work when they began writing their accounts, and most likely used it as a framework to expound on it. Essentially, they used Mark as a synopsis of the life and ministry of Jesus and added more content to bring a richer understanding according to how the Spirit led them. That's why Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. They share a similar arc in the way they tell the story of Jesus. For that reason, it's difficult to find unique passages in Mark. Most of Mark's parables, miracles, and teachings are also accounted for in Matthew and Luke. Nevertheless, there are some beautiful little nuggets if we dig deep enough.

Why are we calling it "From the Friend of a Friend"? Mark was a disciple of Peter. He wasn't one of the twelve disciples and didn't experience Jesus firsthand. Instead, he heard the stories from Peter, and no one had a more close-up view of Jesus. He was not only one of the twelve, but was also part of Jesus' inner circle of three disciples (Peter, John, and James). So, when we read Mark, we're hearing from the friend of a friend of Jesus. We're reading stories Peter probably told over and over. We're reading stories Peter may have even asked Mark to transcribe and document. The Holy Spirit inspired Mark to write His account, and I believe the Holy Spirit can inspire us through it today.

WEEK 1

Mark 1:9-13

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

BOTTOM LINE:

If creation gets to start over, you do too.

NOTES

WEEK 1 | DAY 1

Read: Mark 1

Read & Reflect.

Mark opens by diving directly into the beginning of Jesus' ministry, but He starts by helping his readers see that Jesus is who He says He is- Messiah, the son of God. In this first chapter, He begins to weave together stories of Jesus that reveal His authority given by God. Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist is the fulfillment of prophecies told in the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah, the son of God. What comes next would intrigue any reader, a voice from Heaven claiming Jesus as son and a spirit descending upon Him - a beautiful foreshadowing of what is to come for believers of Jesus (adoption as God's child and His spirit within us). The chapter continues with healing and the casting out of evil spirits; Jesus revealing Himself as the son of God - He is who He says He is.

WEEK 1 | DAY 2

Read: Mark 2

Read & Reflect.

Mark continues to reveal to his audience what makes Jesus so amazing. Jesus begins to explain the spiritual healing (forgiveness) that is happening alongside the physical. When Jesus says to the paralyzed man on the mat, "your sins are forgiven" He is claiming to be God (only God can forgive sins). However, anyone can say those words with little to show if they are true, so Jesus also tells the man to stand up and walk. The visible evidence of healing provides support that He also has the authority to forgive - that He is God. Throughout the rest of this chapter, we begin to see that Jesus is coming to flip the old way of doing things upside down; *a new way is coming.*

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

Read: Mark 3

Read & Reflect.

As Jesus continues to grow in popularity due to healings, we see the forming of 3 distinct kinds of followers. 1. those who have just come for healing purposes or hype, 2. those who are against Him and tied to the law, and 3. those whom Jesus calls His disciples. His disciples are simple people who believe Jesus is who He says He is - the son of God; the one who will save them. They have been doing life with Him, learning His ways, and He has given them His authority to preach and heal like He is doing- to be disciples who make disciples. Like the followers then, we too fall into one of these 3 types of followers; 1. those who like Jesus for what He can do for us but are unwilling to do what He asks of us, 2. those who are so tied to our routines and traditions that we miss when He's asking us to be a part of what He is doing, or 3. those who choose to believe Jesus is whom He says He is, are accepted into the family of God, given the power of the Holy Spirit, and it is reflected in the way we live out our lives.

WEEK 1 | DAY 4

Read: Mark 4

Read & Reflect.

Jesus is known for teaching in parables; stories that sometimes made things easier to understand, but other times were like riddles. Why did Mark decide to include these specific parables in his retelling of Jesus' life? Mark has been taking us on a journey to better understand that Jesus is the Son of God. How do these parables connect? Jesus has been healing people; however, Jesus reveals that God's heart for people extends beyond physical ailments, but what were His listeners to learn from a story about seeds? Jesus' good news is the seed, and the various places it lands represent the type of followers - He is diving deeper into the idea that there are followers of Jesus and non-followers; believers and non-believers. The chapter ends with Jesus sleeping through a storm that is terrifying His disciples but once awakened He calms the storm. His disciples are left asking, "Who is this man?" Even those who know Him have room to learn. Are you seeking to understand and bring others into this seeking and understanding?

WEEK 2

Mark 2:23-28

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

BOTTOM LINE:

Sabbath isn't about a rule you need to follow
but the rest you need to flourish.

NOTES

WEEK 2 | DAY 1

Read: Mark 5

Read & Reflect.

We begin to see a transition in the instructions Jesus gives to those He heals. Earlier in Mark, we saw Jesus heal, ask the person healed to be quiet, and then moved on. In this chapter, however, we see Jesus tell the man who was demon-possessed to go and tell people about what Jesus did for Him. He is empowering those He heals to share the good news. Through all the miracles in this chapter, we see Jesus pointing out a correlation between faith and healing. Amid their fear, Jesus reminds them to have faith. Faith is the antidote for fear. What would it look like for you to share about something Jesus has healed in your life this week? Sharing can feel scary, but we can have confidence to share because our faith is in the One who gives it all purpose.

WEEK 2 | DAY 2

Read: Mark 6

Read & Reflect.

As in previous chapters, Mark writes about the miracles Jesus performs and how He is delegating His power and authority to His disciples to do the same. However, there seems to be this random side story about the beheading of John the Baptist - why? Why would Mark spend so much time breaking down that story for his readers? We see that the story of John the Baptist is sandwiched between stories about Jesus equipping and sending out the disciples in His name - similar work to that which John the Baptist was doing. John the Baptist's experience is a foretelling that bringing the truth of God often comes with trials and tribulation - it is also a foreshadowing of what is to come for Jesus Himself. Jesus also brings this idea to light at the beginning of the chapter when He is rejected by the people from His own hometown. If John the Baptist, one of the most respected prophets, and Jesus, the Son of God, face rejection and tribulation we can have hope that when we face rejection and tribulation we are not alone, but that God is in it with us.

WEEK 2 | DAY 3

Read: Mark 7

Read & Reflect.

We see Jesus flip 2 big Jewish traditions/ideas upside down.

heart health > rule-following. These leaders are asking about Jewish tradition and law because they notice Jesus and His disciples aren't following one. Jesus points out how Jewish leaders have formed traditions to create loopholes in the law originally given to them. He calls them out on being self-seeking. The law was intended to highlight the gap between God's holiness and our sinful nature (choosing our ways over the law/goodness of God), which makes us desperately aware of our need for God. The law was not designed to help us be perfect, but rather reveal our inability to be so. The spirit of the law was meant to bless humans, not burden them.

Faith gives EVERYONE access to Jesus' authority. The Jewish people are known for being God's chosen people, those whom He has spoken to and made Himself known to; however, Jesus makes an unusual, yet intentional, turn in His preaching journey. He heads to lands known as a 'Gentile region.' Gentiles are non-Jewish people, and due to their major cultural differences, associating with them was taboo to most Jewish people. However, because of the faith of both the Gentile woman and the man who was deaf, they are both given access to Jesus' healing. Jesus has the heart for all peoples to be accepted into the family of God.

WEEK 2 | DAY 4

Read: Mark 8

Read & Reflect.

The Jewish people, building their own understanding of the prophecies, have been expecting the Son of God to come as a mighty, political ruler- who will free them from Roman oppression. So, the fact that Jesus does not align with that expectation, the people struggle to believe. Both the disciples and the Jewish leaders have seen many miracles that Jesus has performed, and yet struggle to trust Him. However, we see Jesus treat their lack of trust in 2 different ways - why? It's about the condition of their hearts. The Jewish leaders are asking for a sign because Jesus doesn't align with what they have expected the Son of God to be like. Their hearts are hardened; only wanting to see what they want to see. The disciples, on the other hand, have shown that they long to trust and follow, but in their humanity, they battle the temptation to not trust. Throughout this chapter, we see Jesus do for His people (those seeking to believe Him) what they cannot do for themselves. Towards the end of the chapter, Jesus asks the disciples, "Do you not YET perceive or understand?" (8:17b) - alluding to the fact that they will soon understand. He longs to do for them - for us - so much more than destroy our enemies (what the religious leaders are expecting) or heal our bodies or provide us with food (what the disciples are expecting).

WEEK 3

Mark 4:26-29

The Parable of the Growing Seed

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

BOTTOM LINE:

Do what only you can do so God
can do what only He can do.

NOTES

WEEK 3 | DAY 1

Read: Mark 9

Read & Reflect.

In this chapter, we see the last mention in the book of Mark of Jesus casting out a demon. However, the way this healing experience is explained, it sheds more light on the faith of those around the child, rather than the actual healing of the child. The news of the disciples' healing abilities have spread through the community, and the child's parent originally brings the son to them to be healed, but they are unsuccessful. The child's father then goes to Jesus with words that should resonate with all of us, "I believe, but help my unbelief." The chapter goes on to explain that unbelief can either lead us closer to God or farther away from Him. Jesus tells His disciples that prayer would have allowed them to heal the child, and then pulls them aside to teach them more. The chapter ends with the first real explanation, in this book, of the eternal consequences of sin. This ending, when paired with Jesus' earlier messages that He has come to heal people from more than just physical ailments, reveals to us God's bigger plan of redemption that is taking shape.

WEEK 3 | DAY 2

Read: Mark 10

Read & Reflect.

Here we see a deeper glimpse of God's heart going beyond the surface level of caring for His people. He gently reveals that eternal life and fellowship with God cannot be achieved by man alone. The rich young ruler genuinely believes he has obeyed all of God's commands. However, his rule following, is just that - rule following- and not an obedient and faithful heart for God. Jesus tries to help the man, but we see he is unwilling to repent and align his heart with that of God's. When our 'rule following' is held next to the glorious standard of God, we will never match up. Sin is more than not following rules, it is an act of rebellion against what God has told us is good or best. Like the disciples, we must all ask, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus explains that only by God can man be saved. He goes on to foretell His death for a third and final time. The foretelling of His death reveals that He knows it is coming, He is embracing it - in His obedience it will be a sacrifice, not just a death sentence.

WEEK 3 | DAY 3

Read: Mark 11

Read & Reflect.

Jesus coming into Jerusalem on a donkey, was symbolic to all the Jewish on-seers, setting into motion the plot to arrest, try, and kill Jesus. Zechariah 9:9 (a prophet before the time of Jesus) says, "...Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey..." For religious leaders feeling threatened, this was the final straw. Mark then tells us two stories that illustrate the purpose of God's wrath: Jesus and the fig tree and Jesus cleansing the temple. The fig tree refers to the people outwardly being fruitless, and the temple that they are inwardly corrupt - none of which is pleasing to God. The nation of Israel was often referred to as a fig tree, and Jewish people would have known this reference. Jesus has continually made it clear that the kingdom of God is for everyone, and the religious leaders using the temple to make a profit, rather than to fulfill its purpose to bring people to true worship, would result in isolating the vulnerable rather than caring for them. The fruit that the religious leaders are not bearing is to care for those they were called to bless, which also revealed the corruption in their hearts.

WEEK 3 | DAY 4

Read: Mark 12

Read & Reflect.

Chapter 11 ended in the Temple, and that is where chapter 12 picks back up. Here, Mark weaves together various encounters Jesus has with the religious leaders that help us see, and relate to, their selfish ambitions. Through a series of questions, answers, and parables we see the religious leaders continually seek what is safe for them rather than what is right or true. In the parable with the evil farmers, Jesus reveals that the religious leaders are seeking to keep for themselves what is God's to give, and the questions about taxes and the husbands/wife reveal their longings for Jesus to align with their values as opposed to being willing to consider Jesus' ways as right and true. Even the Old Testament scriptures taught that there was more to Jewish religion than sacrifices and law following (1 Sam 15:22, Hosea 6:6, Micah 6:6-8); however, the rules they have decided to hold tight to are rooted in self-righteousness. The chapter ending with Jesus explaining that the most important commandments are to love God and love others is in clear contrast to the pursuits of the religious leaders. Don't we all feel the same temptations as the religious leaders - to pursue what feels best and safe for ourselves? How do we overcome this? When Jesus explains the most important commandments, He is replying to a sincere question from a religious leader, and ends by telling him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." We are close to the kingdom of God when we approach Him with sincere seeking, and a willingness to face the truth He reveals to us honestly rather than defensively or self-seeking.

WEEK 4

Mark 8:22-26

Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida

They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."

BOTTOM LINE:

The space before God moves requires faith.

NOTES

WEEK 4 | DAY 1

Read: Mark 13

Read & Reflect.

As Jesus and His disciples are leaving the temple, the disciples admire the beauty of it, but Jesus shuts the admiration down with a note that it will be destroyed. Obviously shaken by this news, verse 3 says, "Later..." they ask to know more about the destruction of the temple. They have been pondering, and with a natural desire to be prepared, they ask to know more. To reply, it seems like Jesus goes on a long tangent about tribulation in the future, but rather than analyzing the details of these prophecies, let's ponder - why did Mark decide to include this monologue from Jesus? Jesus has explained to His disciples that He will die and rise again, but they must be wondering what this means for the future. Doesn't the unknown of the future make us all a little anxious? Throughout the details of these tribulations, we see a theme to "watch" and "take heed." Watch: don't be deceived by false idols (false solutions to problems in life) and don't be distracted by political conflicts or natural disasters. Take heed: don't be discouraged from being faithful with the work He has given us (to love God and love others by sharing the good news). Ultimately, He is telling us (believers: then, now, future), to look for Him and not just signs of Him. This is the same point He has been making to the religious leaders this whole time - look for where He is at work and join Him, without getting caught up in any unmet expectations we have for Him.

WEEK 4 | DAY 2

Read: Mark 14

Read & Reflect.

This chapter is packed full of betrayals against Jesus, but with this in mind, the first story Mark tells us almost seems out of place. The example of expensive oils being poured onto Jesus' feet reveals the woman's love and faithful loyalty to Jesus. Her loving loyalty highlights the contrast to that of Judas's unbelieving and betrayal. Passover was a celebration of remembrance for when God had the Israelites put the blood of the lamb over their doors to save their firstborns from death and marked the beginning of their freedom from slavery in Egypt. So, at the Last Supper, when Jesus pours out the wine claiming it to be His blood, He is revealing that He is a New Covenant, the final sacrifice that will save all who believe from death once and for all. Knowing that each of His disciples will betray, deny, and/or abandon Him, He still has them at His table and offers them the bread of life and cup of forgiveness. No matter what we do, God's grace is enough. The same is true for us, we fall short and welcomes us to the table anyway.

WEEK 4 | DAY 3

Read: Mark 15

Read & Reflect.

Mark walks us through the trial, crucifixion, death, and burial of Jesus. Here again, Mark draws a contrast between those who are faithful to what God asks and those who ask, 'what is safe', rather than, 'what is right or true.' We begin with Pilate; we see he is hesitant to charge Jesus as guilty but feels the pressure to appease the crowd and maintain his status. Because of Pilate's unwillingness to show integrity and do what is right even when it is tough, Jesus is sent to be crucified. The chapter ends with a story about Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Jewish high council. The work Joseph put in to prepare Jesus' body for burial would have taken time, intentional planning, and a willingness to risk his high council authority. Joseph, however, decided to be faithful, even in the midst of fear and uncertainty of how it would affect him. God calls us to be obedient and faithful, not all-knowing or fearful. Joseph helped fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9, "He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave." It was important for Jesus to be declared dead by both the Jewish and the Romans because Easter is coming!

WEEK 4 | DAY 4

Read: Mark 16

Read & Reflect.

Even though Jesus repeatedly explained that He would be crucified and raised from the dead, it was a hard truth to comprehend. We see the women go to the tomb with oils, anticipating the smells of a decaying body, not the absence of one. However, the message the man dressed in white gives to the women is hope for us all. The man at the tomb provides both support to what Jesus said all along, paired with instructions and clarity, "...He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid His body. Now go and tell His disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."

1. Jesus is who He says He is, the son of God, meaning His promises must also be true. That through His death and resurrection we are offered salvation (the gospel) - we need only to repent and believe.
2. The messenger greeting the women, who are not anticipating a resurrection, shows that Jesus knows we will battle with unbelief, but He is willing to meet us in the middle of it.
3. The instructions to "tell His disciples, including Peter..." reveal that in the kingdom of God there is forgiveness for failure. The disciples' desertion and denial has been forgiven and they have been made right with Jesus. The same is true for us, when we acknowledge our mess-ups, we are offered forgiveness and unity with Christ again too!
4. "Now go and tell..." We are entrusted and tasked with sharing the good news of the gospel with others!

WEEK 5

Mark 15:1-41

BOTTOM LINE:

Jesus chose to give up his life, but we choose whether we give in ours.

NOTES



MOUNTAINTOP CHURCH



A Five Year Journey