

# **Mark Study Guides**

**By**

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## **Study Guide Resources**

*Let's Study Mark* by Sinclair B. Ferguson

*The NIV Application Commentary: Mark* by David E. Garland

*Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior, 2 Volumes (Preaching The Word)* by R. Kent Hughes

*Mark (Knox Preaching Guides)* by Ralph Martin

*Mark (Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching)* by Lamar Williamson, Jr.

*New Revised Standard Version*

## **Lesson 1 - Study Guide for Mark 1:1-13**

1. How can you be a witness to those within the family of God?
2. How can you be a witness to those in the community?
3. How is Jesus identified in Mark 1:1-13?
4. What does the quotation from Isaiah 40 and Malachi 3 tells us about God's plan?
5. Who was John the Baptist and what does Mark tell us about him?
6. After reading 1:9-11, why do you think Jesus was baptized?
7. What details does Mark give us about the temptation of Jesus and how are they important?

## Lesson 2 - Study Guide for Mark 1:14-45

1. As you read through Mark 1, what witnesses do you find that speak about Jesus and who he is?

What do they say about Jesus?

2. Who have you experienced Jesus to be and what have you told others about Jesus?
3. What is the meaning of Jesus message: "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"
4. What do you think made Simon, Andrew, James and John leave their fishing jobs and follow Jesus?
5. How was Jesus' teaching and ministry different from others?
6. Reread each of the specific healings that are mentioned in Mark 1, the man with the evil spirit, Simon's mother-in-law, and the man with leprosy.

In each case, what moved Jesus to heal the person?

What was the result of each healing?

How did the person respond who was healed (note especially the man healed of leprosy)?

7. In the midst of Jesus' very important and busy ministry, what did he do? (1:35-37)

### **Lesson 3 - Study Guide for Mark 2:1-17**

1. What elements of witness are there in today's lesson text? (2:1-17)

What can we learn about our own witness from today's lesson text?

2. What do you think is the connection between forgiveness of sins and being healed in this story?

Is there a connection between forgiveness of sins and being healed today?

3. What moved Jesus to forgive and heal in this story?

What do you think moves God to forgive and heal today?

4. When you read the story of the healing and the story of Jesus at Levi's house, who do you see yourself as in these two stories? Why?
5. What does Jesus' ministry among "the sinners and tax collectors" say to us about our evangelism and witnessing?

## **Study Guide for Mark 2:18–3:6**

1. If Jesus was teaching in person among us today, what religious practices or rules might he challenge? (2:1-17)
2. How did Jesus answer the question about fasting and what did he mean by his answer?
3. How would you understand and apply Jesus' teaching about the old and new wineskins and old and new patches?
4. What insights does Jesus give you concerning the Sabbath?

How are these insights useful in your Christian walk?

5. What unhealthy quality do you see in the behavior of the people in our text today?

How can you avoid this unhealthy behavior?

## Lesson 5 - Study Guide for Mark 3:7-35

In this section, Jesus' demanding pace of ministry continues as the crowds still flock to him in droves to be healed and as the demons still cringe in alarm (3:7-12). He creates the Twelve, who will help extend his ministry of preaching and exorcisms, and who will be prepared to supplant the current leadership of Israel (3:13-19). Members of Jesus' family try to curtail his ministry, and the teachers of the law from Jerusalem engage in a smear campaign in an attempt to check his surging popularity. Jesus' response to them insinuates that they are guilty of committing the unpardonable sin of blaspheming against the Spirit of God, who is working in and through him (3:20-35). Those who have assumed jurisdiction over teaching and wisdom in Israel demonstrate themselves to be spiritually unfit. The official challenge of the teachers of the law to Jesus compels the reader to decide who the true leaders of Israel are. Jesus' announcement in 3:35 also raises the question of who are the true people of God, the members of the family of the Messiah. (*Mark* by David E. Garland, p. 126)

1. Have you noticed how writers like Mark use stories to talk about what happened in the life and ministry of Jesus? Most of us are drawn to stories, especially stories of good news like helping and healing those in need. Stories are an excellent way to communicate what God has done and what he is doing.

In your life, two stories are very important as you share with others what God has done and what God is doing in your life: How you came to be a Christ-follower and how God has helped you or sustained you.

Write down or rehearse out-loud the story of how you came to be a Christ-follower.

Write down or rehearse out-loud the story or stories of how God has helped you or sustained you in some specific way (through illness, through marriage difficulties, through job loss etc.)?

These are the stories that God wants to use to share his good news with others that you know. Offer a prayer to God this week that he will open the door of someone else's heart and give you the opportunity to tell your stories to another person who needs to be a Christ-follower.

2. What part of Mark 3:7-35 are you most drawn to? Why?

3. What do the various "witnesses" have to say about Jesus?

His family

Evil Spirits

Teachers of the Law

4. Why did Jesus choose twelve disciples?

How are you as a disciple today like the original disciples?

5. What important Kingdom principle did Jesus give in our text today?

6. What important warning does Jesus offer in our text?

7. What understanding of "family" does promote in these verses?

## Lesson 6 - Study Guide for Mark 4:1-34

Jesus' parables by the sea form a large section (4:1-34) that is set off as a unit by the phrase "many parables": "He taught them many things by parables" (4:2); "With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them" (4:33). Key terms appear throughout this section, but the most important is the verb "to hear" (*akouo*), which occurs thirteen times (vv. 3, 9 [2x], 12 [2x], 15, 16, 18, 20, 23 [2x], 24, 33). It brackets the parable of the sower: "Listen!" (v. 3); "He who has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 9). The command "to hear" is the first word in the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4; see Mark 12:29), the confession of faith that faithful Jews recited daily. For that same command to preface Jesus' parables may suggest that his words stand "in continuity with the words of God to Israel in the past." The verb "to hear" appears twice in the quotation from Isaiah 6:9, explaining why everything comes in parables: (lit.) "so that . . . hearing they might hear and not understand" (4:12).

The idea of hearing is the key word in the interpretation of the parable of the sower (or soils). Each type of soil hears the word but reacts differently (4:15, 16, 18, 20). For the good soil, the participle "hearing" is in the present tense (v. 20), suggesting that it needs to continue. The command to hear concludes the parable of the lamp, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 23), and precedes the parable of the measure, "Consider carefully what you hear" (v. 24). This recurring theme ringing through the discourse is a summons "to look beneath the surface," to "discern the inner meaning of what they hear and see." Everyone may listen, but not everyone can catch what Jesus says.

For too many, Jesus' words go in one ear and out the other. In the opening scene, Jesus teaches all the crowd (4:1-2), but in the closing scene a split has occurred among the hearers (4:33-34). He "spoke the word" to them in many parables "as much as they could understand [hear]," and privately he explained all things to his disciples. This discourse explains how and why that division occurred, and it serves as a warning to the readers. Mark's concern is that his readers be attentive and reflective so that the nature of the kingdom of God and how it advances in the world will not whiz by them, leaving them in a stupefied daze as if they were outsiders. (Garland, pp. 151-52)

1. Jesus' parables are a type of story that Jesus used to teach. Parables can be convicting or confusing, depending upon the heart of the hearer.

How did Nathan use a story to teach (convict) David of his sin in 2 Samuel 12?

How can you use stories like Jesus and Nathan told to teach (convict) others?

Could your own personal story be one that might convict or help others? How?

2. According to Jesus, what is the most important factor for producing a good crop?

According to Jesus, what is the most important factor for spiritual growth?

3. What heart conditions does each of these soils represent?

The Path

Rocky Soil

Thorns

Good Soil

4. What message does Jesus want his audience to listen to and hear in 4:21-25?
5. What do you learn about living in God's kingdom in 4:26-29?
6. What mystery does Jesus reveal about the kingdom of God in Mark 4:30-32?

## Lesson 7 - Study Guide for Mark 4:35–5:20

Several themes emerge in the section (4:35–5:20) of Mark we study this week. The motif of death runs through most of the incidents. Jesus does not still an average storm, but a “furious squall” that threatens to swamp the boat (4:37). He delivers the disciples from the peril of death at sea, the place the Jews believed that evil and God clash. In the Gerasene territory across the lake Jesus does not exorcise one who is marginally possessed but one who is victimized by a legion of demons (5:1-20). No one has been able to subdue this ugly customer, so he has been ousted from society and forced to live in the tombs, the realm of the dead.

Each of the characters is driven by a sense of desperation. The disciples find themselves in dire straits, whirled about by a sudden tempest while Jesus sleeps. The demon-possessed man has been beaten and chained by others and now lashes himself with stones in a desperate attempt to purge himself of his inner turmoil. The legion of unclean spirits causes the possessed man to race toward Jesus and prostrate himself before him in a desperate bid to ward off exorcism. The townsfolk from the Gerasene region are desperate to get Jesus to leave their territory before he destroys more businesses.

A third common theme that appears in these accounts is the contrast between fear and faith. One might expect that someone with such power would arouse overwhelming joy. Instead, may respond to Jesus with fear. The disciples fail to have faith and panic when threatened by the sea squall. Jesus chides them for their lack of faith, which here means Jesus’ power, but they are dumbfounded by his power to quiet the sea and are “terrified.” The townsfolk of Gerasa become afraid when they observe the demonized man, whom they have been powerless to control, now in his right mind and sitting at Jesus’ feet.

1. At what time of your life have you been the most desperate?

What were the circumstances?

What did you learn from this desperate circumstance?

2. Does the story of Jesus calming the storm teach us how Jesus calms the storms of our lives or does it teach us something about who Jesus is?

Explain your answer.

3. What kind of faith did Jesus want his disciples to have?
4. What were the circumstances of the man with the evil spirit?
5. Are there elements of the circumstances of this man to which you can relate?
6. How had the community responded to him and why?
7. Can you think of situations you face today that can only be resolved with supernatural power?
8. The people of this story were frightened by Jesus' use of supernatural power. Why do you think people are afraid to seek God's supernatural intervention?

## Lesson 8 - Study Guide for Mark 6:1-30

1. What was the first job you did in service to God?

What was the experience in that job like?

How does your job now in service to God compare to that one?

2. Why were the people of Jesus' hometown offended by him?

What did Jesus say was the source of their problem?

3. Do you think the mission of the twelve is more a training mission or an urgent mission? Why?

4. What was the reason behind John's arrest and imprisonment? (6:17-20)

What are the details of his death? (6:21-29)

5. What message of hope do we get from today's text, especially the account of John's death?

6. A note on shaking the dust from the feet and the theme of "hearing."

The instructions to shake the dust from their feet indicate that the disciples' mission is to have a dramatic flair. It does not eternally condemn those who reject the rule of God, but it does convey how serious it is to do so. It also frees the messenger to move on. One cannot coerce, entice, or threaten people into the kingdom of God. Each person must make his or her own decision. Jesus recognizes that people can and will reject the gospel, but the gesture of shaking dust drives home the gravity of their rejection.

Today, this instruction may create a dilemma. When does one decide that it is time to "shake the dust from one's feet" in an unproductive area and when to stick it out and continue to try to find the lost? During his earthly ministry, Jesus and his disciples had only a short time to call Israel to repentance. The urgent time constraints of his ministry, therefore, make this command less applicable for us today. We have the luxury of staying in one place longer, even if results are not immediately apparent or people are overtly hostile. We should not use this phrase as an excuse to move on when the going gets hard, though there are times when it is necessary to close the book and relocate. But how do we express the grave danger of spurning the message of the kingdom without allowing a vindictive spirit to creep in? How many times have we heard someone say, "I showed them – I shook the dust of that place from my feet"? Mission work is a never-ending task, and one must be careful before writing a place off as a failure or chalking another one up as a success.

The account of John's death throws cold water on the rush of excitement that being able to cast out demons and heal illnesses might bring. It makes plain that Jesus sends disciples into a dangerous world. They may encounter something far more than perilous than indifference. Herod is said to have listened to John the Baptizer with fascination. John elicited both gladness and perplexity in the ruler (see Paul and Felix in Acts). How often God's message exerts a strange power that makes people want to listen to things that disturb them greatly. Apparently, Herod could listen to sermons all day long; but like so many, he had a rock-hard resistance to repentance and was too weak to obey. The cost would have been enormous for him. He would have had to give up his wife, his dancing parties, and his abuse of power.

Hearing John's message and acknowledging that he was a righteous man, however, only served to compound the enormity of Herod's guilt. The theme of hearing reemerges in 6:14 and 20, which brackets the first section 6:14-20. According to the criteria of Jesus' parable of the sower, Herod qualifies as bad ground. He hears gladly, but does nothing. He reveres John as a prophet but cannot muster enough courage to admit he made a rash oath and should not submit to his wife's wicked request. A fearless prophet is undone by a cowardly king, who saved his face but lost his soul.

On her part, Herodias refuses even to listen to John and is perhaps worried over her husband's fascination with this troublesome

prophet. She is a social climber, who is willing to sacrifice even her daughter to secure her hold on her husband and power. She is hardly a shining parental example. What does her daughter learn from being encouraged to dance lasciviously before her father and his guests? What does she learn from the joy of her mother when she presents her with the head of John? Surely Herodias would probably not have openly taught her daughter to be conniving, heartless, and cruel. But she taught her through her actions. More than one parent has communicated to their children, more through action than words: "I'm willing to sacrifice you, your integrity, your self-esteem, to get what I want. Children are resilient and can overcome bad parenting, but, more often than not, the result is a shattered life.

## Lesson 9 - Study Guide for Mark 6:31-56

1. In today's text, Jesus recognized the need to find a quiet place for rest and for prayer, even when he was busy and people needed his teaching and healing. Think about a typical day or typical week for you. How many moments of quiet do you have during the day or week?

Why is it important for you to have moments of quiet and rest?

Why is it important for you to spend time in prayer?

2. Read Mark 6:32-44 several times. Focus your thoughts on two parts of this text after your reading.

He (Jesus) had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. (As you meditate on this phrase, read Psalm 23, Isaiah 40:10-11)

How is Jesus like a shepherd to the people in Mark 6?

But he (Jesus) answered, "You give them something to eat." (As you meditate on this statement, read James 2:15-16 and 1 John 3:17-19)

How does Jesus intend for you to be a compassionate shepherd to others?

3. Read Mark 6:45-52. Focus your thoughts on these statements.

After leaving them, he (Jesus) went up on a mountain to pray.

What is important about this statement and what do you learn from it?

They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

How is the incident with the loaves and the disciples' amazement at Jesus connected to the loaves?

4. What practical advice did you receive from these events from the life of Jesus and his disciples?

## Lesson 10 - Study Guide Mark 7:1-23

1. In preparation for our study I would like for you to think about this verse from Proverbs 4:23:

Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (NIV)

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (NRSV)

What insight does this verse give you to how your heart is connected to how you live?

Considering that the word for "guard" or "keep" is used to mean, "to put in custody or jail" (Genesis 40:3 & 42:19), how might this definition change the way you apply this verse?

2. When you visit another church, especially a church unlike your home church, what are the things you most often notice?
3. What tradition did Jesus and his disciples violate?

What specific law of God did Jesus and his disciples violate?

4. As is often the case with Jesus, he reveals the truth about people and locates the source of the problem. What was the source of the problem of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law?

5. How had the Pharisees and teachers of the law set aside God's commands and nullified the word of God?

What is one example that you know of where Christ followers today might set aside God's commands and nullify the word of God?

6. What is Jesus' "unclean" principle and what does it mean?

## **Lesson 11 - Study Guide for Mark 7:24-37**

1. "It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels." (Augustine)

How does this quote relate to the story in Mark 7:24-30?

Read James 4:1-10 through at least three times. How can you defeat your pride and promote humility in your life?

2. What do we know about the woman that came to Jesus? (7:24-30)
3. How did Jesus answer the woman's request to heal her daughter and how did she respond? (7:27-28)
4. What is the result of this woman's genuine humility?
5. What is unusual about Jesus' healing of the man who couldn't hear or speak? (7:33-35)
6. What connection might you make between the healing miracles of Jesus and the spiritual deafness and blindness of the disciples and the people?

## Lesson 12 - Study Guide for Mark 8:1-26

1. Clearly an important goal of Jesus' life was to call and make disciples. He chose twelve and sought to mold them into future leaders. He left with his disciples and with us these instructions: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Use these questions for a time of reflection and meditation: How does one become a disciple? What is the process one goes through to become a disciple? In your reflection, consider how Jesus sought to develop his disciples and bring his disciples to maturity.

2. What similarities exist between the Mark 8:1-8 and the Mark 6:33-44 feeding miracles? (7:24-30)

What important dissimilarity exists? (Clue: Who makes up the audience of Mark 6 and the audience of Mark 8?)

3. What did Jesus want his disciples to understand (8:21) from the two feeding miracles in Mark 8:1-10 and 6:33-44?
4. What is unique about Jesus healing the blind man in 8:22-26?
5. What message(s) do you take away from these stories in our text today?

## Lesson 13 - Study Guide for Mark 8:27-9:1

1. Read Romans 12:1-21 several times. Read it aloud at least once.

List as many of the characteristics as you can for a person who offers his life as a living sacrifice to God.

Pick two of these qualities that you need to practice to help you be more like Christ.

2. What probing question does Jesus ask of his disciples and what kind of answers does he receive from them? (8:27-29)

3. Why does Peter rebuke Jesus?

Why does Jesus rebuke Peter?

4. This section of Mark is the centerpiece of discipleship. In the second half of Mark's gospel, Jesus shares more details for those who want to be his followers.

According to this text, what are the two basic requirements to be a Christ follower (disciple)?

5. Take some moments to reflect on this question: What might you be giving in exchange for your soul?

6. Practically, what can you do to show that you are proud of Jesus and to confess him in the world?

7. What do you think Jesus meant by what he said in Mark 9:1?

In Mark's gospel, what does Mark 9:1 mean?

## Lesson 14 - Study Guide for Mark 9:2-13

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John to a high mountain, the traditional place for special revelation in Scripture. In Mark's gospel, the greater the revelation, the smaller the number of people who witness it: three male disciples see Jesus' transfiguration and three women followers discover the empty tomb and first learn of Jesus' resurrection (16:1-8).

The three disciples mentioned here figure prominently in this Gospel. They were first called (1:1-20), and their names head the list of the Twelve (3:16-17). Jesus also chose them to come with him when he raised Jairus's daughter from the dead (5:37-43). Peter is the first to confess Jesus as the Christ (8:27-30). James and John will be the first to try to exploit their close ties to Jesus to get seats of power in his kingdom (10:35-45). During the dark hours of Gethsemane, Jesus will take these three with him when he separates himself from the other disciples to pray (14:33). Then they will witness his great distress and agitation. Now they witness his glory as he is "altered to a purer and brighter essence." They also hear the same divine voice that spoke at Jesus' baptism and identified him as God's unique Son. These select disciples are therefore the first persons in the Gospel to receive information about Jesus that only the readers of the prologue and the demons know.

1. Today's story gives the disciples a peek beyond Jesus' suffering to his glory. Read through this text again with this thought in mind and then answer these questions.

How are Jesus' suffering and his glory connected?

How are the suffering and the glory of Christ followers connected?

2. What is significant about the timing ("after six days") of Jesus' transfiguration?
3. What elements of this story are similar to Old Testament events?
4. Why are Moses and Elijah with Jesus at his transfiguration?

5. What conclusion can we draw from Mark 9:5-7?
  
6. Who is Jesus talking about in Mark 9:12-13?
  
7. What significance for us today can we draw from this text?

## Lesson 15 - Study Guide for Mark 9:14-29

The fourth and last of Jesus' exorcisms presents the downhill side of the Transfiguration. It comprises four scenes. The first scene (9:14-19) begins with crowds gathered around the helpless disciples, engaged in a debate, and climaxes in Jesus' lament over this faithless generation. The second scene (9:20-24) brings Jesus face to face with a desperate father and culminates in the man's moving confession of uncertain faith. The third scene (9:25-27) shows faith at work as Jesus drives out a spirit that has tormented the boy and struck him down as dead. The final scene (9:28-29) returns to the disciples' failure to accomplish the exorcism themselves and connects that failure to insufficient prayer.

1. How are faith and prayer linked?
  
2. Take some time to pray this prayer or one similar to it.

"Father, I declare to you today that I do believe, but I want you to help me in those places where I struggle to believe. I do have confidence in you as my Lord and God, but during moments of deep struggle and challenging life situations, I sometimes fail. Please, Father, help me in my unbelief."

John Chrysostom (one of the early church fathers who lived in the 4<sup>th</sup> century) prayed a prayer in each hour of the day. Maybe these ancient prayers could be included in each hour of our day. Imagine how your faith might grow if you prayed this kind of short prayer at the beginning of each hour of the day.

1. O Lord, deprive me not of your heavenly blessings;
2. O Lord, deliver me from eternal torment;
3. O Lord, if I have sinned in my mind or thought, in word deed, forgive me;
4. O Lord, deliver me from every ignorance and heedlessness, from pettiness of the soul and stony hardness of heart;
5. O Lord, deliver me from every temptation;
6. O Lord, enlighten my heart darkened by evil desires;
7. O Lord, I, being a human being, have sinned; do you, being God,

forgive me in your loving kindness, for you know the weakness of my soul;

8. O Lord, send down your grace to help me, that I may glorify your holy name;
9. O Lord Jesus Christ, inscribe me, your servant, in the Book of Life, and grant me a blessed end;
10. O Lord my God, even if I have done nothing good in your sight, yet grant me, according to your grace, that I may make a start in doing good;
11. O Lord, sprinkle on my heart the dew of your grace;
12. O Lord of heaven and earth, remember me, your sinful servant, cold of heart and impure, in your Kingdom;
13. O Lord, receive me in repentance;
14. O Lord, leave me not;
15. O Lord, save me from temptation;
16. O Lord, grant me pure thoughts;
17. O Lord, grant me tears of repentance, remembrance of death, and the sense of peace;
18. O Lord, grant me mindfulness to confess my sins;
19. O Lord, grant me humility, charity, and obedience;
20. O Lord, grant me tolerance, magnanimity, and gentleness;
21. O Lord, implant in me the root of all blessings: the fear of you in my heart;
22. O Lord, vouchsafe that I may love you with all my heart and soul, and that I may obey in all things your will;
23. O Lord, shield me from evil persons and devils and passions and all other lawless matters;

24. O Lord, who knows your creation and that which you have willed for it; may your will also be fulfilled in me, a sinner, for you are blessed forevermore. Amen.

Remember that your time with God provides you an opportunity to hear his voice and to grow deeper in your trust in him.

2. What is the reason for the argument in Mark 9:14-18?
3. What frustration does Jesus express over this argument/event?
4. What do you learn from the boy's father's conversation with Jesus?
5. What kinds of situations challenge your faith or cause you to doubt?
6. What did Jesus mean when he said, "This kind can come out only by prayer"?

## Lesson 16 - Study Guide for Mark 9:30-50

This unit begins with Jesus' second announcement of his coming suffering and resurrection. Again, the implications sail over the heads of the disciples, and as soon as they continue their journey "on the road" (9:33), they begin to quarrel over who is the greatest. The disciples' dullness allows Jesus (or compels him) to give more teaching on the requirements for discipleship.

1. In our "Glorify God" ministry model, there are three key relationships: Disciple, Servant, and Witness. Which one of these relationships is highlighted in our Mark study this week?

How would you apply to your life Jesus' statement: "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last and servant of all"?

2. Why did Jesus take the little child in his arms?
3. What concern did the disciples have in 9:38-41 and how did Jesus respond to their concern?

What lesson might this text teach us about our attitudes toward, and relationships with, other Christ followers?

4. In the context of Mark 9:30-50, who would you conclude are the "little ones" of verse 42?
5. About what danger does Jesus warn all Christ followers in 9:43-50?

## Lesson 17 - Study Guide for Mark 10:1-16

This text covers two vital principles for life in the kingdom of God: marriage is a work of God and gets its meaning from God and the kingdom of God belongs to the childlike. As you read these texts make sure you note why Jesus discusses these two subjects. In 10:1-12, he responds to a test question from the Pharisees, who often approached Jesus with less than pure motives. In 10:13-16, he responds to the unfair rebuke by his disciples of those who brought children to Jesus.

1. Jesus always calls his followers to live by God's standards, no matter what the popular opinion or practice may be. What are the prevailing opinions about divorce today?

What is the standard for marriage that Jesus holds up in our text today?

How can we best encourage Jesus' standard for marriage?

2. Where in Mark have we already encountered a controversy over marriage?
3. What legal concern related to marriage do the Pharisees use to test Jesus?
4. To which Old Testament text of Moses are the Pharisees referring?

What reason does Moses give for divorce?



## Lesson 18 - Mark 10:17-31

The story of Jesus' encounter with the rich man, together with the teaching after this story, strikes a jarring note in a world of "haves" and "have-nots." These very categories bring to mind the struggle of those who have possessions to keep them and of those who lack possessions to get them. Jesus' words cut into such a world in an unexpected way. He expresses no outrage and makes no denunciations. Rather, Jesus calls; and in calling, he makes a radical demand.

1. Look over these lists of words. What do the words in each list have in common?

Give  
Distribute  
Share  
Donate  
Generous  
Unselfish  
Kindness  
Self-control  
Manager

Receive  
Collect  
Save  
Accumulate  
Greedy  
Covet  
Envy  
Selfish  
Owner

Reflecting on these word lists, how do you need to grow in your understanding of being a steward (The resources I have belong to God and I need to manage them for his glory) rather than an owner (The resources I have belong to me and I will use them as I please)?

2. What question does the rich man have for Jesus and how does Jesus respond to him?
3. What does Jesus' love for this rich man mean?
4. What imperatives (verbs) does Jesus use to describe what this rich man should do?

5. How would you explain Jesus' statements in verses 24-25, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God?" The disciples' response in verse 26 gives you a hint.
  
6. What does Jesus mean by his words in verse 27?
  
7. What does our text today have to say about the relationship between Christ followers (disciples) and possessions?

## Lesson 19 - Study Guide for Mark 10:32-52

I like what Lamar Williamson says in his commentary on Mark about Mark 10:32, "Anyone who contemplates following Jesus without fear and trembling has not understood true discipleship, according to Mark."

Jesus, the disciples, and the relationship between them are the three centers of interest in the entire discipleship section in Mark 8:22–10:52. Each of these themes comes into clear focus in the third, climactic prediction of Jesus' passion in 10:32-45.

The healing of blind Bartimaeus at Jericho is the last healing story in Mark. Although not as spectacular as the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead, the cure of Bartimaeus is climactic in the sense that its outcome marks the goal of Mark in the life of its readers—following Jesus "on the way."

1. How would you define discipleship?

List at least three ingredients that the Holy Spirit might use to form Christ in you.

2. What are the thoughts and feelings of the people who followed Jesus in Mark 10:32-34?
3. Why does Jesus give the details of his death for a third time (8:31, 9:31 and 10:33-34)?
4. What points stand out to you in James and John's conversation with Jesus in 10:35-40?
5. How do the other disciples respond to James and John's request of Jesus and what lesson does Jesus teach his disciples about their proper places?

6. How does the healing of blind Bartimaeus compare to the request of James and John?
  
7. Why does Bartimaeus call Jesus "the Son of David?"
  
8. What lesson(s) do you get from the story of Bartimaeus?

## Lesson 20 - Study Guide for Mark 11:1-33

We often refer to the day that Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a colt as “the triumphal entry.” Most translations of the Bible have this title just before Mark 11. However, as you read the text, there is more an attitude of acceptance on Jesus’ part than there is an attitude of triumph. The crowds are the ones who shout and chant, but Jesus exhibits a kind of quiet strength. He knows his throne will be a cross and his crown will be a crown of thorns. He does show his “kingly” spiritual authority as he drives out the buyers and sellers from the temple, curses the fig tree, and stands up to the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders of Israel.

1. How would you understand or define quiet strength?

How is being a Christ follower connected to quiet strength?

Where are some places and what are some situations where you should show quiet strength?

2. What Old Testament texts are connected to Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem?
3. What might these verses teach us in light of what the crowd does during Jesus’ arrest and trial?
4. Why do you think that Mark weaves together the story of the fig tree and Jesus clearing the temple?

5. What applications or meanings can we draw from the fig tree, Jesus clearing the temple, and what Jesus says to the disciples and the religious leaders?

## Lesson 21 - Study Guide for Mark 12:1-17

These two texts deal with questions of authority and paying taxes to Caesar. Mark 12:1-12 is closely linked to the previous paragraph in chapter 11 where a hostile group of chief priests, scribes, and elders question Jesus about authority. Mark 12:13-17 addresses a highly-charged issue in Jesus' day, as it can be in our day, paying taxes.

1. How does self-centeredness hinder your progress as you seek to be a follower of Christ?

How does being a US citizen fit with being a follower of Christ?

2. Who do each of the characters in Mark 12:1-12 represent?

Owner of the vineyard	-
Vineyard	-
Tenants	-
Servants	-
Son	-

3. What lessons do you take away from the parable of the vineyard and the tenants?
4. How does the wisdom of Jesus' answer to the Pharisees and the Herodians speak to our situation in God's family today?

## Lesson 22 - Study Guide for Mark 12:18-44

The topics of these verses are the resurrection of the dead, the most important commandments, the Christ as the son of David, bad influences, and the poor widow's offering.

1. Read Mark 12:18-27 and then answer the following questions.

Who comes to Jesus? Who were they?

What is their motive in coming to Jesus?

How does Jesus answer? What are they wrong about? Why?

How does he deal with their question?

What do they assume?

What was Jesus' argument?

2. Read Mark 12:28-34 and answer the following questions.

Why does the scribe approach Jesus in v.28?

What is Jesus' answer to his question about commandments? What is implied?

How does the scribe respond?

What is the difference between the scribe's statement and Jesus'? What does the scribe add?

What's significant about this addition? Where are they?

Where is this man in relation to Jesus? How's his theology?

How does Jesus respond to him?

Why only "not far"? What does the scribe do now? What should he have done?

3. Read Mark 12:35-40 and answer the following questions.

Having answered all the questions, Jesus begins teaching. What does he focus on? What does he ask about?

What do the scribes say? What did David say?

Why did the throng hear him gladly (v.37)?

Who were the scribes? What does he say about them?

How can we summarize the scribes' problem?

What was the original issue under discussion? What does Jesus make the issue?

4. Read Mark 12:41-44 and answer the following questions.

What were the widow's options?

What do we learn from Jesus' response to the widow?

5. Answer these application questions.

What are Jesus' priorities?

What does that mean?

Do we know the Scriptures? Do we live them out?

Do we know the power of God?

How can we follow the widow's example and live in a way that requires faith?

## Lesson 23 - Study Guide for Mark 13:1-37

Mark 13 is the second lengthy discourse in Mark. In the first discourse, a parable discourse in chapter 4, the theme was "hearing." In the Mark 13 the theme is "watching." Jesus' disciples must watch because evil will materialize in proud nationalism, false religion, and sacrilegious symbols that will threaten believers. But Jesus confidently assures his disciples that ultimate victory falls hard on the heels of great tragedy and a full measure of suffering.

In Mark 13, the context is Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple. There are three parts to Jesus' discourse. The first part (13:5-23) offers a double warning to watch out for false prophets and false messiahs. The second part (13:24-27) deals with the coming of the Son of Man. The third part concludes with the parables of the budding tree (13:28-29) and the watchful and indifferent doorkeepers (13:33-37). These parables surround Jesus' solemn declaration that no one, not even the Son of Man, knows the hour (13:30-32).

1. What's the context of Mark 13 and what do you think Jesus is talking about?
  
2. What do the disciples ask Jesus privately?

What are the disciples asking about in verse 4?

3. What are not the signs of the destruction of the temple?

What is the sign?

4. What is Jesus referring to when he mentions "birth pains" in verse 8?
  
5. When did the disciples get handed over to councils and flogged? What does this language sound like?

6. When was the gospel preached to all the nations?
7. What is the Old Testament background for the abomination of desolation?
8. What are some of the possibilities of what Jesus is talking about?
9. What is the meaning of verses 24-26?
10. Application questions: (See 1 Thessalonians 5:1-1)  
How are we prone to fall asleep spiritually?  
  
What does it mean for us to keep watch?



## Lesson 25 - Study Guide for Mark 14:32-52

This text describes the Gethsemane experience of Jesus and his disciples. Our study this week closes with the arrest of Jesus and the desertion of all those around Jesus. The Mount of Olives, where Gethsemane is located, is the ridge on the east side of Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley. This area offers a good view of the temple area. It's the location of the Last Supper and also where Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:12).

1. Why did Jesus go to Gethsemane and whom did he take with him?
2. What do Jesus' posture and words tell us about what he was feeling?
3. What kind of prayer does Jesus pray? (For a hint look at the prayers in Psalms 13:1-3; 22:1-21; and 31:1-24)
4. What is the significance of the words "Abba" and "cup" in Jesus' prayer?
5. What does Jesus ask his disciples to do while he prays?

How do the disciples respond?

6. What are the significant details of Jesus' arrest?
7. What do we learn for application from our study today?

## Lesson 26 - Study Guide for Mark 14:53-72

This section details the trial of Jesus and the denial by Peter.

1. Why is accountability so important in God's family?
2. Why does Mark parallel the two stories of Jesus' trial and Peter's denial?
3. What are the two charges that are brought against Jesus?
4. What is the significance of Jesus' answer to the high priest's question in verse 62?
5. Read and reflect on the account of Peter's denial in 14:66-72.

What are the stages of Peter's denial?

Are three denials significant?

Where are some places or what are some circumstances where we might deny Jesus?

## Lesson 27 - Study Guide for Mark 15:1-20

Jesus' trial before Pilate is parallel to his trial before the Sanhedrin. In each trial, Jesus is interrogated, condemned, and mocked. The parallel between these two trials draws attention to the responsibility of both religious and civil authorities for the death of Jesus. He is rejected first by Jerusalem, then by Rome; by Jews and by Gentiles, though for different reasons.

To the two agents responsible for Jesus' death, Mark adds a third party: the crowd. No one in Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion is just a spectator. All are participants, even the reader.

1. Read Galatians 5:16-26. In this text, Paul mentions 9 fruits of the Spirit. These fruits of the Spirit are spiritual qualities or practices that help you become healthy and stay healthy. Fruits need to be fertilized and cultivated in order to grow. Beside each fruit, list how you can make that fruit grow in your life.

Love:

Joy:

Peace:

Patience:

Kindness:

Goodness:

Faithfulness:

Gentleness:

Self-Control:

How would prayer, meditating on the word of God, and accountability help these fruits grow?

2. How would the trial, mocking, and crucifixion of Jesus have been meaningful to Mark's audience?

3. Read Mark 15:1-20 again. What character flaws in the religious leaders, in Pilate, and in the crowd guaranteed that Jesus would be crucified?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What does the behavior of Jesus in this whole incident teach us about his character? (See 1 Peter 2:20-23)

What does Jesus' behavior teach us about how we should behave under pressure?

5. One of the greatest challenges that Christ followers face today is living the way the world lives rather than living the way Jesus lived. List three situations where you would be challenged to choose between the way the world behaves and the way you should act as a follower of Christ.

(1)

(2)

(3)

## Lesson 28 - Study Guide for Mark 15:21-47

The crucifixion is the event toward which Mark's entire story builds. The crucifixion story is only twenty-one verses and the crucifixion itself is reported in just four words (in Greek, three; verse 24a).

1. Read Galatians 5:16-26. In this text, Paul mentions 9 fruits of the Spirit. These fruits of the Spirit are spiritual qualities or practices that help you become spiritually healthy and stay healthy. Fruits need to be fertilized and cultivated in order to grow. Beside each fruit, list how you can make that fruit grow in your life.

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-control

How would prayer, meditating on the word of God, and accountability help these fruits to grow?

2. Read through the words of this poem by English Poet, Geoffrey Anketell Studdert Kennedy, and share what message you think the author is trying to get across to his audience about the crucifixion of Jesus.

### *Indifference*

1 When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged Him on a tree,  
 2 They drove great nails through hands and feet, and made a Calvary;  
 3 They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were His wounds and deep,  
 4 For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.

5 When Jesus came to Birmingham they simply passed Him by,  
 6 They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die;

7 For men had grown more tender, and they would not give Him pain,  
8 They only just passed down the street, and left Him in the rain.

9 Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do,"  
10 And still it rained the wintry rain that drenched Him through and through;  
11 The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see,  
12 And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for Calvary.

3. What is significant about each of these events that occur at Jesus' crucifixion?

Jesus' cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"  
(See Psalm 22, Isaiah 59:2, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Deuteronomy 21:22-23, and Galatians 3:13.)

The tearing of the temple veil

The centurion's confession

4. What lessons can you learn from Mark's cross scene?

## Lesson 29 - Study Guide for Mark 16:1-8

The women followers of Jesus rise to unexpected prominence at the very end of the story. Prior to Jesus' crucifixion and burial, there had been no indication in the Gospel that Jesus had any women followers. Now they surface as the prime witnesses to the events that are the foundation of Christian belief: that Jesus died, was buried, and was raised (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Their emergence as the key witnesses oddly attests to the truth of what Mark reports since it is highly unlikely that the church would have invented a small group of women to furnish evidence for such events.

I want to add a note about the ending of Mark. Most translations have Mark 16:9-20 in brackets with a note like "The earliest manuscripts and some other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20." One thing is for sure, in the original text of Mark (Koine Greek), the language changes with verse 9. It is for this reason that many scholars believe the original gospel ended with verse 8. Verses 9-20 seem to be written in a very different style. Mark often used summary paragraphs through his gospel, but this final summary is significantly different in vocabulary and structure. Is it possible the original ending was lost? I suppose. But consider Mark's message. He begins by telling us this is the story of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Repeatedly the text verifies his identity. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the leper, calmed the storms, walked on water, cast out demons, fed the multitude, and even raised the dead. Further, time after time, he told of his impending death and resurrection. For Mark to end his message with the empty tomb fits well with his overall message of Jesus as the Son of God.

1. How does Mark 16:1-8 fit with Jesus' predictions about his death? (See Mark 8:31-38, 9:30-35, and 10:32-40)
2. Why did the women wait until the first day of the week to anoint the body of Jesus?
3. What was their concern on the way to the tomb?
4. What did they experience when they entered the tomb?



## Lesson 30 - Study Guide for Mark Review

This week I want to challenge you to read all 16 chapters of Mark. This kind of reading gives you a feel for the book as a unit. Take a note pad or a journal and write down your impressions as you read through.

1. How is reading through the entire book of Mark different from reading it in parts?
2. List at least two significant ideas you got from each of these sections of Mark.

Jesus is identified (1:1–1:13)

Jesus ministers in Galilee (1:14–4:34)

Jesus withdraws from Galilee (4:35–8:26)

Jesus journeys to Jerusalem (8:27–10:52)

Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem (11:1–13:37)

Jesus' passion narrative (14:1–16:8)

3. The major theme of Mark is Jesus as the Son of God (Mark 1:1, 11; 3:11; 9:7; and 15:39)? How would you use Mark 14:27–15:1-39 to teach someone about the possible ways people respond to the message of Jesus?

## Lesson 31 - Mark Review

This week I want to challenge you to read all 16 chapters of Mark. This kind of reading gives you a feel for the book as a unit. Take a note pad or a journal and write down your impressions as you read through.

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Jesus is identified (1:1–1:13)

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Jesus withdraws from Galilee (4:35–8:26)

Jesus journeys to Jerusalem (8:27–10:52)

Jesus' Ministry in Jerusalem (11:1–13:37)

Jesus' Passion Narrative (14:1–16:8)

3. What parts of Mark are unique to Mark, that is, found only in Mark? This is a lengthy list, so pick out three or four that stand out to you.

Teachers, I am giving you a lengthy list of items that are unique to Mark. This might help you to select items you want to use in this final, summary

lesson of Mark. Thank you once again for using your gift of teaching to bless your class.

- The testing of Jesus in the wilderness for forty days contains no discourse between Jesus and Satan, and only here are wild beasts mentioned (Mark 1:12–13).
- The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). Not present in either Matthew 12:1–8 or Luke 6:1–5.
- People were saying, "[Jesus] has gone out of his mind", see also Rejection of Jesus (Mark 3:21).
- Parable of the Growing Seed (4:26–29).
- Only Mark counts the possessed swine; there are about two thousand (Mark 5:13).
- Only Mark gives healing commands of Jesus in the (presumably original) Aramaic: *Talitha koum* (Mark 5:41), *Ephphatha* (Mark 7:34).
- Only place in the New Testament Jesus is addressed as "the son of Mary" (Mark 6:3).
- Mark is the only gospel where Jesus himself is called a carpenter (Mark 6:3). In Matthew he is called a carpenter's son (Matthew 13:55).
- Only place that both names his brothers and mentions his sisters (Mark 6:3; Matthew has a slightly different name for one brother Matthew 13:55).
- The taking of a staff and sandals is permitted in Mark 6:8–10 but prohibited in Matthew 10:10 and Luke 9:3.
- The longest version of the story of Herodias' daughter's dance and the beheading of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14–29).

Mark's literary cycles:

- 6:30–44 - **Feeding** of the five thousand;
- 6:45–56 - Crossing of the **lake**;
- 7:1–13 - **Dispute** with the Pharisees;
- 7:14–23 - *Discourse on Defilement*

Then:

- 8:1–9 - **Feeding** of the four thousand;
  - 8:10 - Crossing of the **lake**;
  - 8:11–13 - **Dispute** with the Pharisees;
  - 8:14–21 - Incident of **no bread** and discourse about the **leaven** of the Pharisees.
- 
- Customs that at that time were peculiar to Jews are explained (hand, produce, and utensil washing): 7:3–4.
  - "Thus he declared all foods clean." 7:19 NRSV, not found in the Matthean parallel Matthew 15:15–20.
  - Jesus heals using his fingers and spit at the same time: 7:33; cf. Mark 8:23, Luke 11:20, John 9:6, Matthew 8:16.
  - Jesus lays his hands on a blind man twice in curing him: 8:23–25; cf. 5:23, 16:18, Acts 6:6, 9:17, 28:8, laying on of hands.

- Jesus cites the Shema Yisrael: "Hear O Israel . . ." (12:29-30); in the parallels of Matt 22:37-38 and Luke 10:27 the first part of the Shema (Deut 6:4) is absent.
- Mark points out that the Mount of Olives is across from the temple (13:3).
- When Jesus is arrested, a young naked man flees: 14:51-52. A young man in a robe also appears in 16:5-7.
- Mark doesn't name the High Priest, cf. Matt 26:57, Luke 3:2, Acts 4:6, John 18:13.
- Witness testimony against Jesus does not agree (14:56, 14:59).
- The cock crows "twice" as predicted (Mark 14:72). The other Gospels simply record, "the cock crew".
- Pilate's position (Governor) isn't specified, 15:1, cf. Matt 27:2, Luke 3:1, John 18:28-29.
- Simon of Cyrene's sons are named (Mark 15:21).
- A summoned centurion is questioned (Mark 15:44-45).
- The women ask each other who will roll away the stone (Mark 16:3), cf. Matt 28:2-7.
- A young man sits on the "right side" (Mark 16:5), cf. Luke 24:4, John 20:12.
- Afraid, the women flee from the empty tomb. They "tell no one" what they have seen (Mark 16:8), compare with Mark 16:10, Matt 28:8, Luke 24:9, John 20:2.

Mark is the only canonical gospel with significant various alternate endings; however, most of the contents of the traditional "Longer Ending" (Mark 16:9-20) are found in other New Testament texts and are not unique to Mark. The one significant exception is 16:18b "and if they drink any deadly thing", it will not harm those who believe, which is unique to Mark.