

1. What is distinctive about Jesus' teaching in the synagogue, and why were the people "astonished" by it (1:21-22)? What does Mark mean by saying that Jesus taught "as one who had authority, and not as the scribes"? How does this authority relate to Jesus' identity? (See Matt. 7:28-29; John 7:46; and Heb. 1:1-3.) How should recognizing Jesus' authority change the way we listen to and obey his Word?
2. In 1:23-24, why does the demon call Jesus "the Holy One of God"? What does its knowledge of Jesus teach us about the reality of spiritual powers and their recognition of Christ's identity? (See Mark 3:11-12; 5:6-8; Luke 4:41; and James 2:19.) How can we avoid the twin errors of, on the one hand, dismissing the reality of spiritual evil, and on the other hand, becoming preoccupied with it? How should the knowledge that Jesus is Lord shape our confidence when we find ourselves confronted with temptation or spiritual opposition?
3. Why does Jesus command the unclean spirit to "Be silent, and come out of him!" (1:25; see also Luke 4:35-36)? What do Jesus' commands and the demon's immediate obedience demonstrate about his authority? How does this event anticipate the broader biblical teaching concerning Christ's victory over Satan and the powers of darkness? (See Col. 1:13-14; 2:15; Heb. 2:14; and 1 John 3:8.) Where are you tempted to fear the power of evil more than you trust the authority of Christ? How can the gospel's declaration of Christ's victory strengthen you in times of temptation, fear, or spiritual struggle?
4. What is the significance of the people's response (1:27-28)? They marvel that Jesus brings "a new teaching with authority," and note that "he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." Why does Mark place Jesus' authoritative teaching alongside his authoritative actions? What does this combination tell us about the nature of his ministry? (See Matt. 4:23-25; John 5:36-40; and Acts 2:22.) How does this connect with the Old Testament reading (Deut. 18:15-22)?