



## Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides!

If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions towards the end of the document.

- These study guides will be written by thoughtful and experienced Life Group Leaders.
- Use these guides as a head-start in your own preparation as the needs and culture is different from each group.

### NEW THIS YEAR:

As we enter this new season at Grace Chapel in search for the next Senior Pastor, we invite you to consider the significance of this moment and to incorporate a time of prayer for the search.

### Outline

- I. Introduction and Main Scripture Readings
- II. Group Discussion Questions
- III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search
- IV. The Journey Resources
- V. Support for the Leader

### How to Use These Study Guides:

1. **Before the meeting:** Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
2. **Check In:** Begin each meeting with a short time checking in with one another.
3. **Read Scripture:** You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
4. **Ask Questions:** Don't feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with and see how the conversation flows.
5. **End with Prayer:** Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

*If your group meets over Zoom:*

- Expect to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
- Be sensitive to attention spans over zoom. Keep meetings shorter than they would be in person.

### Group Leader Support:

- Please reach out to your Campus Pastor if you have any questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic.
- If you have questions about or feedback on the Study Guides, please reach out to Pastor [Tim Ghali](#) or [Grace Lee](#) from the Group Life team.

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## LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

for Sermon given on January 21, 2024

by Pastor Bryan Wilkerson

### THE MESSAGE – Mark 1:21-28



#### I. Introduction

Welcome to our sermon series, *Kingdom Come: When God Does Something New*.

We're exploring the early chapters of Mark's gospel, learning what we can about how God does new things. So far, we've learned:

- When God does something new, He always prepares the way
- When God does something new, He always calls for repentance

Today we are going to focus on the message of Jesus.

Questions: What was it about Jesus' teaching, about his message, that made it so authoritative and set it apart from the teaching of the day?

Bottom Line: When God does something new, it's always grounded in the life-changing message of Jesus.

Let's begin in prayer before we begin reading and discussing our text.

***Main Scripture Readings:*****Mark 1:21-28**

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. <sup>22</sup> The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. <sup>23</sup> Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup> “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

<sup>25</sup> “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” <sup>26</sup> The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

<sup>27</sup> The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” <sup>28</sup> News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

## II. **Group Discussion Questions:**

1. Pastor Bryan mentioned a sermon he heard that shaped his life. It was given by pastor Chuck Swindoll, who opened his message with, "I've come here to encourage you." The key text was 1Samuel 30:6: But David found strength in the Lord his God.
  - What is one sermon that changed your life? Who was the pastor? What circumstances or season of life were you in? What was it about the message that made such a life-changing/long-lasting impact on you?
2. In Mark 1:15 Jesus says, "The Kingdom of God is near." The Kingdom of God is the rule of God. It is God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven. Wherever and whenever people surrender to the rule of God – in a life, or a home, or a church, the Kingdom comes, bringing wholeness, and wellness, and peace, and justice, and life to the full.

From Matthew 6:9-10:

<sup>9</sup> "This, then, is how you should pray:

"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
<sup>10</sup> your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.

- We don't have to wait for our earthly bodies to pass to experience heaven, but we can bring heaven here on earth if we surrender to the Holy Spirit to guide our actions. Discuss with your group how this could change your perspective on daily life, or how it could empower you to do God's work.
3. The message of Jesus was disturbing, and still is because it exposes the dark tendencies within every one of us. Jesus calls us out to face the truth about ourselves.
    - Recall a time where something that Jesus said disturbed you or made you feel uncomfortable. How did you respond to Jesus' words? What truth did you learn about God and about yourself?
  4. Pastor Bryan quoted Mark Young, President of the Denver Seminary, who several weeks after the Israel-Hamas conflict broke out, said, "We're not just broken, we're wicked." This was in reference to the fact that 95% of the Nazi soldiers during World War II were raised in the Christian faith. Pastor Bryan raised the question, "Who knows what any of us are capable of under the right, or wrong, conditions?"
    - How are you processing Mark Young's statement? When was the last time you processed your own wickedness?
    - What can we reflect on regarding our own Christian witness, especially for those of us who were raised in the Christian faith?

- What blind spots do we have? In what ways are we also susceptible to contribute to wickedness and evil deeds?
5. Pastor Bryan mentioned Julie Hannah's book, *A Skeptic's Investigation into Jesus*, about the author's decades long struggle before she came to Christ.
- Take a moment to reflect on your faith journey and relationship with Jesus. Is there a moment you can recall to where you believed the life-changing message of Jesus? Have you faced your own brokenness, or wickedness, and asked Christ to forgive you, and to set you free?
  - Do any members of your group who have received Christ want to share when they surrendered and/ or how their lives were transformed? If there are seekers in your group, they can share where they are on their spiritual journey.
6. According to a recent survey, more people are open to spiritual conversations today than they were before the pandemic. Religion is a lightning rod, and it can be difficult to broach the subject.
- Are you sharing the life-changing message of Jesus with the people around you? Who is the person God is putting in your heart right now? How would you like to share the love of Christ with him/her?
  - What are some challenges in sharing the message of Jesus with others? Encourage your small group to share testimonies where the good news was shared and discussed with others.
7. As you close in prayer think about those in your social circles who are seekers, but have not yet received Christ. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in ways to strengthen their faith. Think about family, friends, neighbors, colleagues and co-workers. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you find opportune moments to share the good news through words or action.

***Take Home Message:***

When God does something new, in our lives or the church or the world, it's always grounded in the compelling, disturbing, life-changing message of Jesus.

***Let's Pray***

### **III. Prayer for Senior Pastor Search**

During this next ministry year as we navigate transitions, we invite you to secure time during your life group to pray over the search process. Click [here](#) to access the full resource of the prayer guide.

#### **Prayers for Preparation of the heart**

- Pray for God to reveal to you the condition of your soul or the work of God's Spirit within you, as you consider your feelings about the Senior Pastor search process.
- Prayer is not just an opportunity to make requests from God, but to listen to what God might want for us during this season of transition. Pause and listen for any invitation from God that he is asking you to enter into.

#### **Prayers for the Purposes of God**

- Pray that God will use the people of Grace Chapel in the fulfilling of his mission to further the Gospel message and for us to be people of peace and healing in a broken world.

#### **Prayers for the People of Grace**

- Pray that Grace Chapel will seek the Lord as we continue our vision to be a vibrant, growing, multicultural community of seekers and believers, discovering life with God for the good of the world. Pray that we will continue with our mission to make and mobilize more disciples for Jesus Christ in Greater Boston and beyond.

#### **Prayers for the Person God's calling**

- Pray that they will have a passion to continue the work the Lord is doing at Grace Chapel and that they will be excited about the opportunities here.
- Pray that the new pastor will have a clear vision for how to minister to the people of Grace Chapel and the surrounding community.

#### **Prayers for Discernment**

- Pray for God's clear direction in how resumes are examined and interviews conducted.
- Ask God to bring the right person to the attention of the committee.
- Pray for the Search Committee to have God's wisdom in all the questions and information they share with the prospective pastor.

#### IV. The Journey



*We're all on a journey. Where is yours taking you?*

The beauty of the way of Jesus is that it's not just good for us, it is good for the world around us. But that kind of beautiful life doesn't come from just hearing the words of Jesus. It comes from putting them into practice.

Three kinds of practice, actually:

- The **with-God life** of our personal habits and routines;
- The **with-others life** of our genuine and life-changing relationships; and
- The **for-the-world life** that makes an impact beyond our immediate homes and families, into our communities and beyond.

Growing as disciples of Jesus will make a Kingdom difference in our world and a transformative difference in our lives as believers and as a group. And these resources are helpful in identifying the next steps for our journeys.

**Launching by the end of September: The newly, revised Discipleship Planning Tool**

We invite your group to [take the assessment](#) and to spend a session to share about the practice and perspective you chose to focus on for the next three months.

## V. **Support for the Leader**

These Teaching Points are provided to help the group leader make connections from the message to their group with both insights from the Biblical text and opportunities in the life of our church.

### ***Teaching Points:***

- Observations about Jesus teaching ministry:
  1. **The message of Jesus was compelling, and still is** because it stirs something inside of us, even the most weary and cynical among us, and points us toward new and better things
  2. **The message of Jesus was disturbing, and still is** because it exposes the dark tendencies within every one of us. But we need to hear the sometimes, to face the truth about ourselves. Jesus isn't afraid to call us out on it
  3. **The message of Jesus was transformative, and still is** – because it frees us to become our better selves
- Jesus' core message:
  1. **The time has come**
  2. **The kingdom of God is near** – the Kingdom of God is within you. Wherever and whenever people surrender to the rule of God, the Kingdom comes, bringing wholeness, and wellness, and peace and justice, and life to the full
  3. **Repent and believe the good news** – When we turn and believe the good news of the Kingdom, we can choose new and better things