



STEELE HILL
A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

BIBLE STUDY

THE BOOK OF MARK

JESUS. PEOPLE. PURPOSE.

MARK 1:1



*Encountering the Savior,
One Story at a Time*



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Gospel of Mark

Author

Although there is no direct internal evidence of authorship, it was the unanimous testimony of the early church that this Gospel was written by John Mark (“John, also called Mark,” Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37). The most important evidence comes from Papias (A.D. 140), who quotes an even earlier source as saying: (1) Mark was a close associate of Peter, from whom he received the tradition of the things said and done by the Lord; (2) this tradition did not come to Mark as a finished, sequential account of the life of our Lord, but as the preaching of Peter—preaching directed to the needs of the early Christian communities; (3) Mark accurately preserved this material. The conclusion drawn from this tradition is that the Gospel of Mark largely consists of the preaching and stories of Peter arranged and shaped by Mark. Mark also traveled with Paul on at least one missionary journey, so Paul’s influence is reflected in his Gospel as well.

John Mark in the New Testament

It is generally agreed that the Mark who is associated with Peter in the early non-Biblical tradition is also the John Mark of the New Testament. The first mention of him is in connection with his mother, Mary, who had a house in Jerusalem that served as a meeting place for believers (Ac 12:12). When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from Jerusalem after the “famine visit,” Mark accompanied them (Ac 12:25). Mark next appears as a “helper” to Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Ac 13:5), but he left them at Perga in Pamphylia to return to Jerusalem (Ac 13:13). Paul must have been deeply disappointed with Mark’s actions on this occasion, because when Barnabas proposed taking Mark on the second journey, Paul flatly refused, a refusal that broke up their working relationship (Ac 15:36-39).

So Barnabas took Mark, who was his cousin (Col 4:10), and departed for Cyprus. No further mention is made of either of them in the book of Acts. Mark reappears in Paul’s letter to the Colossians written from Rome. Paul sends a greeting from Mark and adds: “You have received instructions about him; if he comes to you, welcome him” (Col 4:10; Phm 24). At this point Mark was apparently beginning to win his way back into Paul’s confidence. By the end of Paul’s life, Mark had fully regained Paul’s favor (2 Tim 4:11).

Place and Time of Origin

According to early church tradition, Mark was written “in the regions of Italy” or, more specifically, in Rome. Mark was written somewhere between 50 and 70 A.D., probably in the mid 60’s; it was the first gospel written, forming the basis for much of Matthew and Luke.

Recipients

The evidence points to the church at Rome, or at least to Gentile readers. Mark explains Jewish customs (7:2-4; 15:42), translates Aramaic words (3:17; 5:41; 7:11,34; 15:22,34) and seems to have a special interest in persecution and martyrdom (8:34-38; 13:9-13)—subjects of special concern to Roman believers

Special Characteristics

Mark’s Gospel is a simple, succinct, unadorned, yet vivid account of Jesus’ ministry. It reads like an action-packed drama, emphasizing more what Jesus did than what he said (for example, he records only 9 of Jesus’ 46 parables). Mark moves quickly from one episode in Jesus’ life and ministry to another. He uses the word “immediately” 47 times giving this whole account a sense of urgency.

Gospel of Mark ~ Discussion Questions

1. What does the word “gospel” mean?
2. Is it important to know the background of the writer of the book? Why? Have you ever gotten an e-mail that was attributed to a well-known person (Andy Rooney, Bill O'Reilly, Jay Leno, etc.) and then found out from Snopes it was written by some unknown person? Did it lose credibility (even if true)?
3. How old was Mark?
4. Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabus when they visited Antioch and he also went on Paul's first missionary journey. But in Perga Mark left them to return to Jerusalem. Why might he have done this? Have you ever gotten part way into a trip or a task and then turned back (or felt like turning back)? How did the leader or others on the trip feel about you?
5. Years later, Mark is with Paul in Rome (Col 4:10) and still later Paul says he is “helpful” to him (real words of praise from Paul, 2 Tim 4:11). If you're in someone's bad graces, what do you usually do: (A) walk away from it, (B) try to turn the situation around? Have you ever tried to win back the confidence of a teacher or boss? Were you able to do it? How?
6. What makes you discouraged? (A) failing on a task? (B) disapproval of a teacher, boss, or leader? (C) feeling you'll never be as good as someone else? (D) feeling your prayers aren't being answered? What do you do about this?
7. When this book was written, Christians were being persecuted in Rome. The great fire in 64 A.D., probably started by Nero, was blamed on Christians. Do you think Mark may have written the book to prepare his readers for such suffering? Would learning more about Jesus' life make a person more able to bear persecution? How about you? What form does persecution of Christians take today?
8. The places of greatest persecution of Christians today are North Korea, Turkey, Cyprus, Algeria, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Sudan, Pakistan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Philippines, China, Vietnam, and India. What do many of these nations have in common? Who are the targets of most of the persecution?
9. In verse 1:1, Mark characterizes the entire book as, “the beginning of the Gospel.” What do you think he means by this?

Mark 1:1-13 ~ Scripture Verses

John the Baptist Prepares the Way

The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”— “a voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’ ”

And so John came, baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And this was his message: “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus

At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 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 desert, and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Mark 1:1-13 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What does the word “gospel” mean?
2. Mark quoted a passage from the Old Testament that he said was from Isaiah. Was it? (Isaiah 40:3, Malachi 3:1)
3. Why is it important to prepare for the coming of an influential person? Who did Mark say came to prepare the way for Jesus?
4. Why do you think Mark said nothing about the birth of Jesus? (Remember from the last lesson what we said inspired Mark’s writing.) (Acts 10:37-38)
5. What was the basic message of John the Baptist? (Mark 1:4) What does repentance involve? Would John baptize anyone who came to him? (Matthew 3:7-8) Does John’s type of baptism apply to us today?
6. How was Jesus’ baptism different from John’s? (Mark 1:8, John 20:22-23) Was Jesus’ baptism promised by prophets in the Old Testament? (Joel 2:28-29)

7. What was important about Jesus being baptized by John? (Matthew 3:15, 2 Corinthians 5:21) What was unique about it? Think “trinity.” (Mark 1:9-11)
8. What happened right after Jesus baptism? Is this something you would expect of the Holy Spirit? Why do you suppose this happened?
9. Mark’s description of the temptation of Jesus in a single verse (Mark 1:13) is quite abbreviated compared to that found in Matthew 4:1-11 and Luke 4:1-13.
 - A. Mark is also the only one who speaks of wild animals; why would he mention them?
 - B. Mark says that Jesus was tempted by Satan. Does Satan tempt us today? (1 Peter 5:8–9, Ephesians 6:12)
 - C. The longer accounts describe three temptations: fleshly desires, power, and pride. How did Jesus respond to the temptations? (Luke 4:8) Are we tempted by these things today? What does John say we should do when we are tempted? (1 John 2:15-17)
 - D. Do we have tools to help us overcome temptation? What are they? (Ephesians 6:16-17, Matthew 26:41)
 - E. After overcoming temptation, angels ministered to Jesus. Do you think the same could happen to you? (Hebrews 1:14)

Mark 1:14-28 ~ Scripture Verses

The Calling of the First Disciples

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!” As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Jesus Drives Out an Evil Spirit

They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, “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!” “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 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 evil spirits and they obey him.” News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Mark 1:14-28 ~ Discussion Questions

1. When Jesus said, “the time has come” and “the kingdom is near” (1:15) was he referring to chronological time (the calendar) or to something else?
2. How did Jesus want the people to respond to the fact that the kingdom of God is near? (1:15) What exactly is repentance?
3. What kind of invitations do you enjoy receiving? Why?
4. How did Jesus get people to follow him? (1:17) Do you think the promise to make them evangelists (fishers of men) was enough incentive to follow Jesus?
5. For what kind of relationships are you willing to sacrifice your own needs? Would you sacrifice personal achievements, job, friends, or even family for the sake of Christ? Do you think Christ really expects us to give up everything to follow him? What prevents you from following Jesus wholeheartedly?

6. Capernaum is a town on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (also known as Tiberias, Gennesaret, and Kinnereth) in northern Israel. Peter and his mother lived there close to the synagogue where Jesus taught. Why was Jesus allowed to teach? What OT scripture did he read? (Luke 4:16-19, Isaiah 61:1-2)
7. What makes a person a good teacher?
8. Why were people “amazed” at Jesus’ teaching? (1:22, 1:27) How do you feel when you are around people of authority? What gives a person authority?
9. Why would a demon-possessed man be admitted to the synagogue? What did the evil spirit say to Jesus? How did Jesus respond? (1:23-25) Do we find demons and evil spirits in churches today?
10. How did the evil spirit respond to Jesus’ command, “Come out of him?” (1:26) Was there a purpose in this act? How did the people respond to this miracle?
11. Demonic activity in the Bible appears in waves with more in Jesus’ time than any other. Why should this be? Are demons still active today? How can we get rid of them?

Mark 1:29-45 ~ Scripture Verses

Jesus Heals Many

As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place

Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

A Man With Leprosy

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured. Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Mark 1:29-45 ~ Discussion Questions

1. Jesus had previously called the first four apostles to "come, follow me" and "at once they left their nets and followed him." (1:17-18) Do you think that any of the apostles were married? (Mark 1:30, 1 Corinthians 9:5)
2. When the apostles told Jesus about Peter's mother-in-law being ill, how did he respond? What does this suggest that our attitude should be about helping others (even after a long, tiring day)? Why should we follow the disciple's example of bringing our problems to Jesus?
3. What was the woman's immediate response to Jesus healing her? (Mark 1:31) Following the example, what should we do when others serve or help us?
4. Why did Jesus not want the demons to speak about him (Mark 1:34, Luke 4:41) and not want the man with leprosy to tell that Jesus healed him (Mark 1:44)?

5. Here in the middle of a busy schedule, Jesus goes to a solitary place to pray (1:35). Why do you think Jesus spent so much time in prayer if he was the Son of God? How should we follow his example? Is early morning a good time to pray?
6. Do you ever start a prayer by saying, “If you are willing, please do thus and so” or do you ever close a prayer by saying, “if it be your will” or “your will, not mine, be done?” What do the man’s words tell about his faith? (Mark 1:40)
7. Considering the laws of Moses, Jesus touching the man with leprosy and telling him to show himself to the priest were somewhat contradictory. How so?
8. How did the leper respond to all that happened to him? How did this affect Jesus’ ministry? (Mark 1:45)
9. Have you ever done the opposite of what you knew Jesus wanted you to do?
10. Looking at the leper’s example, what attitude do you think is crucial to receive healing from the Lord?
11. Why do you think God sometimes heals people miraculously and at other times chooses not to? Is it because of their attitude or something else?

Mark 2:1-17 ~ Scripture Verses

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that 1 he had come home. So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

The Calling of Levi

Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. As he walked along, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the "sinners" and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark 2:1-17 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What do you think would be the most difficult thing about being paralyzed? Are there types of paralysis other than physical? Name some.
2. What dilemma did the paralytic man and his friends face? (2:2-4) Have you ever tried to get into a room or club that was overcrowded? What was the result?
3. How did the paralytic man's friends solve their dilemma and get Jesus' attention?
4. What motivated Jesus to respond to the paralytic man's plight? What did he say to him? (2:5) Why do you suppose that he chose to forgive the man's sins before healing him physically?
5. Which is easier for you to do: A) forgive others or B) care for them while they are sick?
6. Why did the Pharisees accuse Jesus of blasphemy? (2:7)

7. How did Jesus respond to the thoughts of the Pharisees? How did he show he had the authority to forgive sins? (2:8-11)
8. What feelings or attitudes do you have about the IRS? How do you think people felt about Levi in his tax collector's booth? Where did he stand officially? (2:14)
9. What did Levi stand to lose by leaving his work to follow Jesus? (2:14)
10. From Luke (5:27-32) we learn that Levi gave a great banquet for Jesus, which was attended by other tax collectors and "sinners." Who were these sinners? What was the significance of eating with them?
11. From Matthew 9:9, we learn that Levi was also called Matthew, perhaps given that name by Jesus as he done with Peter. Why might Jesus do this?
12. How did the Pharisees respond to Jesus' actions? What was it about Jesus' life-style and attitude that made the Pharisees so uncomfortable?
13. How do some churches today tend to treat "tax collectors?" How should we treat the outcasts of society? Do you do so?

Mark 2:18-3:6 ~ Scripture Verses

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

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. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Mark 3

Jesus Heals on the Sabbath

Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone." Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.\

Mark 2:18-3:6 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What dilemma puzzled the people who came to Jesus? (Verse 2:18) Why do you think the disciples of John the Baptist were fasting?
2. What was Jesus' answer to the people? Why do you think Jesus used a wedding feast to illustrate following him?
3. Have you ever fasted? When and for how long? Did you have a deep sense of hunger or was it more a ritual? What role do you think fasting should play in your spiritual life?

4. These are the first of Jesus' parables. They are among the few that are in all three synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). What is the point he is making with a story about an old coat? Why not put a new patch on an old coat? Why not put fresh wine in an old wineskin?
5. The people in Jesus' audience were some disciples of John the Baptist (and perhaps some Pharisees). The parable had a special meaning for them. What was it? Hint: do you think his message was that an old garment should be repaired with a patch that has been preshrunk? Or that vintage wine should be put in old wineskins? Or was the message something else? Is there a message here for us today?
6. In what ways does following Christ require us to replace old habits with new ones? Why do we resist making these changes?
7. In Verse 2:24, what were the disciples doing that upset the Pharisees?
8. What was Jesus' response to the Pharisees? (2:25-26) According to him, why were both David and Jesus' disciples justified in breaking the Sabbath restriction?
9. Explain the meaning of 2:27-28 – Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."
10. How were Jesus' views and the Pharisees' views of piety different? Is it more important to follow the spirit of the law or the letter of the law? Can following the spirit of the law get you in trouble?
11. In 3:2, it says the Pharisees watched to see if Jesus would heal the man. What's the significance of saying "would heal?" Why were the Pharisees watching to see if Jesus would heal the man on the Sabbath? What did Jesus ask them? (3:4) Who was actually breaking the Sabbath? How?
12. Are there areas in which churches today follow the "letter of the law" rather than the "spirit of the law?" Explain.
13. Have you ever experienced a time when the requirements of your Christian faith seemed to conflict with a human need? What should we do in these cases?

Mark 3:7-19 ~ Scripture Verses

Crowds Follow Jesus

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.

Jesus Appoints the Twelve

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Mark 3:7-19 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What is it like to be in a huge crowd such as at a stadium, airport, or festival? How is it possible to feel lost or lonely in such a huge crowd of people?
2. Why did such large crowds of people follow Jesus? (3:8) Name five reasons.
3. From where did the people come from? How far and long must some of them have traveled?
4. What do the details of this story tell us about Jesus’ popularity? What was at the root of his popularity at this early time in his ministry?
5. What did Jesus tell his disciples to get? Why? Was Jesus’ fear legitimate? (3:9)
6. How did the evil spirits respond to Jesus when they saw him? (3:11) How would the evil spirits have known who Jesus was? What were they afraid of? (1:24)
7. Why did Jesus not want the evil spirits to reveal who he was? (3:12, Luke 4:41)
8. How would it make a difference in your life if you had more confidence in Christ’s power and authority?

9. By what criteria do you choose your friends? Or do you wait to be chosen?
10. 10. List five qualities that are important in a friend: A)_____ B)_____ C)_____
D)_____ E)_____
11. What qualities did Jesus look for in his apostles? A)_____ B)_____
C)_____ D)_____ E)_____
12. What qualities are important for a leader in the church? A)_____ B)_____ C)_____
D)_____ E)_____
13. What does the fact that Jesus chose Matthew (a tax collector), Simon, (a political extremist), and Peter (a fisherman) as apostles tell you about the kingdom of God? Does this make any difference to you?
14. Has the call of Jesus in your life changed your attitude toward people with whom you previously would not have associated? If you changed, do you view it as a good thing? Where did you get your original biases? What would that person think of you changing?
15. How can you determine how best to serve God with your particular gifts and abilities?
16. How can you best learn from and take advantage of other more mature believers? Be specific!

Mark 3:20-35 ~ Scripture Verses

Jesus Accused by His Family and by Teachers of the Law

Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family [or his associates] heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.” And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.” So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house.

The Unforgivable, Eternal Sin

Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.” He said this because they were saying, “He has an evil spirit.”

Jesus Defines His True Family

Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.” “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Mark 3:20-35 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What was the problem at the onset of the story? (3:20) Who tried to solve it? (3:21)
2. What did Jesus’ family think of him? Why might they have thought what they did? Do we do this today? How? Why? What did the teachers of the law think of Jesus?
3. Who was “Beelzebub” that the Pharisees said possessed Jesus?
4. How did Jesus refute the accusations that he was possessed by a devil?
5. Mark 3:28-29 is a tough passage. We don’t want there to be a sin that God won’t forgive. We don’t want to think that there is a line that cannot be crossed.
 - A. Was/is there an unforgivable sin in the Old Testament? (Deuteronomy 29:17-21) Summarize this in your own words.

- B. Jesus' death on the cross brought believers forgiveness from all sins, didn't it? So are there any unforgivable sins in the New Testament? What sin is described in each of these passages? Summarize each one.
- (a) Hebrews 10:26-29
 - (b) Mark 16:16 and Revelation 21:8
 - (c) Mark 3:28-29 (What exactly does "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" mean?)
 - (d)
- C. If you committed an unforgivable sin, can you recover from it? How? Who has the power to grant you forgiveness? (This was a major point of debate in the early church that has never been resolved.) (John 3:18, 3:36, Luke 6:37)
- D. What can you do to avoid committing an unforgivable sin?

6. When Jesus mother and brothers arrived, how did they summon Jesus? (3:31-32) What did they want to do for him? Who were these brothers?
7. What rhetorical question did Jesus ask? (3:33) Why?
8. How did Jesus answer his rhetorical question? Who did he say was his family? (3:34)
9. What unique name is given to "whoever does God's will?" (3:35)
10. How do you interpret Jesus' actions towards his flesh-and-blood family? What does this account tell you about his priorities?
11. How has your commitment to Christ affected your relationships with members of your family? Has this commitment ever caused conflict? How did you resolve it? How should you relate to members of your family who are not Christians?

Mark 4:1-25 ~ Scripture Verses

The Parable of the Sower

Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times." Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'" [Isaiah 6:9,10] Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

A Lamp on a Stand

He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear." "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."

Mark 4:1-25 ~ Discussion Questions

1. This is one of only 6 parables (out of 46) recorded in all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). What does that tell you? What is a parable?
2. Why would a farmer allow precious seed to land on the path, or rocks, or among thorns? Is he an irresponsible farmer scattering seeds at random?
3. What happened to each group of seeds?
4. How did Jesus conclude his parable? What did he mean by that? How much of the parable did the people understand? How much did the disciples understand? (4:9-13)

5. Why didn't the people or the disciples understand this parable? By quoting Isaiah 6:9 did Jesus desire that some people would not understand the parable?
6. Did Jesus design his parables to have trick meanings, hidden meanings, or more than one basic interpretation? Why do some listeners discover the truth in a parable and others do not?
7. Why do you suppose that this was among the first parables (#11 of 46) that Jesus told?
8. What kind of people today might be represented by the seed that fell on the path? (4:4, 4:15)
9. About the seed that fell on the shallow soil with rocks underneath. Why couldn't those who received the word with joy stay faithful? (4:5-6, 4:16-17)
10. According to Jesus, the people represented by the seed that fell among the thorns were choked by what? What other things (or people) might the thorns represent? (4:7, 4:18-19)
11. To the description of the good seed producing a large crop, Luke says in 8:15, "But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop." Instead of "persevere," other Bible versions say "enduring" or "patiently." Why is perseverance or patience necessary for all who receive the Word? How long did it take for you to understand the gospel of Christ?
12. In Jesus' parable about the lamp, what does the lamp stand for? (4:21-23, John 8:12)
13. Who did Jesus intend to disclose the hidden meanings of his parables? (Mark 4:22, Luke 11:33-36, Luke 12:2) Do you think this applies to us?
14. Mark 4:24-25 seem like somewhat strange verses. What exactly do they mean?

Mark 4:26-41 ~ Scripture Verses

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.”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.” With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Jesus Calms the Storm

That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?” They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Mark 4:26-41 ~ Discussion Questions

Jesus had recently told the parable of the four types of soil, then the parable of the weeds among the good plants, and now he tells this parable, recorded only by Mark (4:26-29), about a seed growing into grain. This is followed by another well-known seed parable.

1. Who does the man who plants the seed represent? The seed? The plant it grows into? The soil? Think before you answer. (Mark 4:26-29)
2. Have you ever tried to grow a plant from seed? Does every seed sprout? Does every seed grow to maturity? What does it take for a plant to grow, and where do you get the things you need?
3. What was the growth process like for the seed? (4:27-28) Quick or gradual? Well understood or mysterious and unknown? What’s the meaning of the parable?
4. Does the seed have anything to do with being “born again?” (1 Peter 1:22-25) How about with saving your soul? (James 1:21)

5. How does this parable help you better understand what the kingdom of God is like? How do you feel knowing that the message of Christ has a mysterious power in itself?
6. Does this parable imply an obligation for believers to sow the seed, water it, and fertilize it in others, i.e., speak of your faith to others? (1 Corinthians 3:6–9)
7. What small or seemingly insignificant possession is worth a great deal to you? Why?
8. Jesus often referred to mustard seeds in what context? (Matt 17:20, Luke 17:6)
9. The parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32) must have been confusing to Jesus' listeners. Everything was wrong. The mustard seed is not all that tiny, while the yellow mustard plant is only 8" tall and the black mustard bush is typically about 5 feet tall, hardly a tree that could shelter birds. Explanation please?
10. The term 'the birds of the air' is sometimes used symbolically to mean the children of the prince of the air. Did Jesus mean by this analogy that the kingdom of God will be in a constant struggle with Satan and his followers?
11. What is the point of this parable? (Remember, this is a "Kingdom of God" parable.)
12. In the story of Jesus quieting the storm (Mark 4:35-41), why were the disciples surprised with Jesus? (4:38) Why did Jesus rebuke his disciples? (4:40)
13. Have you ever felt distressed at events out of control? Has God helped you handle things? How can you trust more completely in him? Do you ever doubt Jesus' deity?

Mark 5:1-20 ~ Scripture Verses

The Healing of a Demon-Possessed Man

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an evil spirit came from the tombs to meet him. This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him any more, not even with a chain. For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Swear to God that you won’t torture me!” For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!” Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” “My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” He gave them permission, and the evil spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Mark 5:1-20 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What do people today think of the devil (Satan) and demons?
2. What was the demon-possessed man’s life like? (5:3-5)
3. How did the demon-possessed man respond to Jesus? (5:6-7) Why were the demons so terrified of Jesus? In what ways do people today ask Jesus to leave them alone?
4. Are people today possessed by the kind of demons described here? What kind of demons have possessed you or do possess you? Have you ever done something you didn’t want to do but felt powerless to stop yourself? (Romans 7:15-19, Galatians 5:17)
5. In general, how did Jesus treat the man? (5:8-20)

6. What did Jesus ask the demons? (5:9) What did the demons beg of Jesus? (5:7, 10, 12) The events in this scene are rather unusual—why? Why did Jesus allow the demons to enter the pigs instead of just banishing or killing them?
7. What emotion gripped everyone except the man who had been possessed by demons? (5:14-17) What did the Gerasene people think of Jesus gracious action?
8. Do you believe that demons are active today? What situations or forces have left you not in your right mind? What are powers of evil that hold people in bondage in our day and age? How does naming those powers help break their power?
9. Often Jesus asked those that he healed to be quiet about the healing, but he told this man to tell others about it (5:19). Why? When Jesus touched your life (assuming he did), do you think he would ask you to be quiet about it or tell others about it?
10. When has the Lord delivered you from a serious sickness or difficulty in your life? How did you react? Did you keep it secret or did you tell others?
11. What make you resistant to talking about God or religion?

Mark 5:21-43 ~ Scripture Verses

A Dead Girl and a Sick Woman

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering. At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ” But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?” Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Mark 5:21-43 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What is a synagogue ruler? (5:22) Is it like a Pharisee or Sadducee?
2. What was Jairus’ attitude toward Jesus? (5:23) Why did he ask Jesus to “put your hands on her?” What did that mean? What does it mean today?
3. The story of Jairus and his dying daughter are interrupted in the next ten verses when a woman touches Jesus’ cloak. Why was her condition so wretched? What would be like that today?
4. How was the bleeding woman healed? (5:27-29)
5. Why do you think the woman who was healed was initially afraid to admit that she had touched Jesus’ cloak?

6. Have you ever felt afraid of God like the woman who touched Jesus? Why? In what way is it good to be afraid of God? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13, 28:15)
7. What kind of healing did Jesus provide to the woman in Mark 5:34?
8. Meanwhile, Jairus got word that his daughter died and his friends advised him not to bother Jesus any more. Have you ever been in that position where you feel that the worst has happened and there's no point praying any more?
9. Rank the effectiveness of the following prayers: A) pastor, priest, or leader prays out loud, B) group of 3 or 4 people; each one prays out loud, C) one person prays with another out loud, D) blessing before a meal out loud, E) individuals pray at a prayer meeting out loud, F) silent prayer in church, G) silent prayer by yourself (at home, in car, etc.) G) Lord's prayer, psalm, or scripture
10. What did Jesus say to Jairus? (5:36) In what situations in your life do you need to heed Jesus' words to "just believe?" Why is it hard to do?
11. How did people react when Jesus expressed confidence that the dead girl would be all right? (5:40) Have you ever laughed at someone who told you that "things will be all right?" Why do we tell people things will work out okay?
12. After Jesus cast out demons, he told the man to tell his family about it. Now, he tells everyone not to let anyone know about this girl. Why?

Mark 6:1-29 ~ Scripture Verses

A Prophet Without Honor

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.” He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith.

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.” They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

John the Baptist Beheaded

King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” Others said, “He is Elijah.” And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.” But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!” For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, whom he had married. For John had been saying to Herod, “It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.” So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, “Ask me for anything you want, and I’ll give it to you.” And he promised her with an oath, “Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom.” She went out and said to her mother, “What shall I ask for?” “The head of John the Baptist,” she answered. At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: “I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter.” The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John’s head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. On hearing of this, John’s disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Mark 6:1-29 ~ Discussion Questions

1. Is it easier to talk about your faith with a family member, a close friend, or a stranger? How have your family or old friends responded to your new faith? Is the saying, “familiarity breeds contempt” true? Why or why not? Does this affect you?

2. What did Jesus do in Nazareth? What prevented him from doing any miracles?
3. At what was Jesus amazed? (6:6) In what ways do you prevent Jesus from working miraculously in your life? In what specific areas of your life would you like to have more faith? How can you increase your faith?
4. Why do you suppose that Jesus sent the disciples out two by two? What does this mean to you today?
5. How did Jesus want his men to travel? Why did he tell them to pack lightly? What did Jesus say to do if they were not welcomed?
6. When you are given a difficult task (at school, on the job, in the military, etc.), do you try to avoid it, regard it as a challenge, seek help from a partner, or just plunge right in?
7. How can you apply Jesus' advice to your personal Christian witness? Do you find it uncomfortable to talk about your faith? How should we react to people who reject our testimony?
8. What does this passage teach us about our responsibility to pastors, missionaries, and volunteer workers?
9. King Herod? Huh? Was there more than one ruler named Herod?
10. Why had Herod Antipas arrested John the Baptist and put him in prison? (6:17-18)
11. What caused Herod to offer his daughter, Salome, anything she wanted? Would he have given her half of his kingdom? (6:22-23) Would Herod have had to give her what she, on behalf of her mother, asked for?
12. John unsuccessfully attempted to keep Herod accountable. How can we keep other Christians accountable? Successfully? With no lingering hard feelings?

Mark 6:30-56 ~ Scripture Verses

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.” Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Jesus Walks on the Water

Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened. When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

Mark 6:30-56 ~ Discussion Questions

1. Where had the disciples been? (Mark 5:6) What did they do when they returned? Why would they have wanted to be alone with Jesus?
2. In what situations do you really want to be alone (or with a small group of friends)? How do you feel when you are forced to be with a crowd?
3. What did the apostles want to do with the crowd? If you had been an apostle, how would you have reacted to the crowd’s overwhelming need?

4. Why did Jesus say in Verse 37, “You give them something to eat”? Is this fair?
5. The feeding of the 5,000 is one of only three events recorded in all four Gospels (the others are Jesus’ baptism and His death and resurrection). What does this tell you about it? Why is it so important?
6. What does Jesus’ response to the crowd tell us about Him? What does it tell us about the disciples? What does it tell us about how we should live our lives? There are many deep lessons in this simple story; what are some of them?
7. Why did Jesus make his disciples go on ahead of him? (6:45) Why do you think Jesus, the son of God, spent time in prayer? What does this say to us?
8. What’s wrong with these idiot disciples? They think that Jesus is a ghost and are terrified of him (6:49-50). Then they’re amazed when the wind dies down (6:51) even though Jesus had done it once before (4:3 7-4 1). And they didn’t understand how he fed the 5,000 (6:52). Of course, we’d never be like that, right?
9. When has God done something for you that was completely amazing to you? What was it? Why are we sometimes surprised at God’s goodness? Should we be?
10. Have you ever been terrified? Have you been terrified even though you know God loves you and answers your prayers? Have you seen God act in your life once, but have doubts that he’ll do it again? Why?
11. What does the fact that “all who touched [Jesus] were healed” tell us about the people’s attitudes and belief? What does this tell us about human nature? Answer this again, but think ahead to Jesus entering Jerusalem and his crucifixion. What can you learn from this?

Mark 7:1-23 ~ Scripture Verses

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were “unclean,” that is, unwashed. (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.) So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with ‘unclean’ hands?” He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: “‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.” And he said to them: “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.’ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: ‘Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban’ (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.” Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a man can make him ‘unclean’ by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him ‘unclean.’” After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him ‘unclean’? For it doesn’t go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods “clean.”) He went on: “What comes out of a man is what makes him ‘unclean.’ For from within, out of men’s hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man ‘unclean.’”

Mark 7:1-23 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What are some of your favorite traditions?
2. What were the Pharisees and teachers of the law concerned about? Why? How is washing the dirt off your hands with soap and water different from the type of washing the Pharisees were talking about? (7:2-5)
3. How did Jesus avoid answering the Pharisees’ question directly? (7:6-7)
4. Isaiah and Jesus both criticized holding onto the traditions of men. What’s wrong with holding onto great old traditions?
5. What example did Jesus give to prove his accusations against the Pharisees? What is Corban and how does it enter in to this example? (7:10-12)

6. What did Jesus mean when he said to the Pharisees that “you nullify the word of God by your tradition...?” (7:13)
7. How did Jesus place tradition in the proper perspective? (7:10-19) How did the Pharisees’ use of ‘unclean’ differ from Jesus’?
8. What church traditions either can or do stand in the way of non-believers becoming interested in Christianity?
9. In what ways do you think it is possible to worship the Lord in vain?
10. As he did so often, Jesus referred to the Pharisees and teachers of the law as hypocrites (7:6). What exactly is a hypocrite? In what ways are Christians today hypocrites?
11. Mark adds what important parenthetical comment in Vs 7:19? (Acts 10:9-16)
12. That’s quite a list of ‘unclean’ things that come from within a person’s heart in 7:21-22. Which ones have you been guilty of in the past 3 months? Which ones are most troubling to you? What practical steps can you take to eliminate them? What evil attitudes or actions would you add to this list?

A. Sexual immorality	D. Theft	G. Greed	J. Slander
B. Adultery	E. Murder	H. Deceit	K. Arrogance
C. Lewdness	F. Malice	I. Envy	L. Folly

Other evils that trouble me: _____

Mark 7:24-37 ~ Scripture Verses

The Faith of a Syrophenician Woman

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter. “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs.” “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.” She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

The Healing of a Deaf and Mute Man

Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged him to place his hand on the man. After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “Ephphatha!” (which means, “Be opened!”). At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly. Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

Mark 7:24-37 ~ Discussion Questions

1. When was a time you felt like an outsider?
2. Why did Jesus go to the vicinity of Tyre (about 30 miles from Capernaum)?
3. Name four characteristics of the person who approached Jesus. (7:25-26)
4. Was Jesus’ response to her? A. Gentle, B. Harsh, C. Offensive, D. Humiliating Why would he respond in this way? (7:27)
5. Was the woman insulted by Jesus’ response? How did she reply to him? What can we learn from her response? (7:28)
6. Why was Jesus impressed with the woman? Does it pay to be persistent? (Psalm 55:17, Mark 13:13, Luke 5:17-20, 18:1-8, 2 Cor 4:16, James 5:11, Ephesians 6:18)
7. How would you compare your level of faith with that of the woman in this story? Are you persistent in your prayers? If not, why not?

8. The journey in 7:31 is about 100 miles long over mountainous terrain. It would have taken several weeks to complete. Why might Jesus have chosen to travel this long and difficult route with his disciples? What previously happened here? (5:20)
9. What would it be like to be deaf or unable to speak? How do most ordinary people treat those with disabilities?
10. Who did the people bring to Jesus? What did they want Jesus to do? Did the deaf man have faith in Jesus? If not, why did he come to Jesus?
11. Put yourself in the sandals of this deaf mute. What kind of life do you have? Do you have lots of friends? Do you worship God? Why do you think these people are pulling you toward Jesus? What on earth is Jesus doing?
12. An age-old complaint that both Jews and Christians have is that God blesses non-believers as much as believers. (Malachi 3:14-15) This story illustrates one reason for this, which is what? Why else might God bless non-believers?
13. What does this story tell us about how we ought to pray and how Jesus relates to us? Look at Verse 7:37: is amazement the basis of your relationship with Jesus or is it something else?

Mark 8:1-21 ~ Scripture Verses

Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.” His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?” “How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked. “Seven,” they replied. He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and they did so. They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. About four thousand men were present. And having sent them away, he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha. The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.” Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

The Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod

The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. “Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.” They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.” Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” “Twelve,” they replied. “And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?” They answered, “Seven.” He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

Mark 8:1-21 ~ Discussion Questions

1. How did Jesus feel toward the crowd of people that followed him? (8:2-3) How do you think his disciples might have felt? How would you feel?
2. If you were in the crowd, how would you feel? A) Hungry, B) Plan to leave to get some food, C) Hanging on Jesus’ every word, D) Go along with the crowd, E) Hoping for a miracle, F) Angry, G) Worried about your wife and kids, H) ??
3. How do you feel when listening to an especially long sermon? Is it the same as reading a book or watching a sports event for a long time? Why or why not? How can you get the most out of a sermon (of any length)?
4. How did Jesus involve his disciples with the food problem? (8:5-8) How are we like (or not like) the disciples?

5. The Bible often reports dialogs between Jesus and the Pharisees. Weren't there other types of Jews? Is this different or similar to Christianity today?
6. How did the Pharisees try to test Jesus? How did Jesus respond? (8:11-12) Have you ever tried to test the Lord? What happened?
7. Why do people demand signs from God? Why does God refuse to give us signs or proof of his existence and presence?
8. What had the disciples forgotten to bring on their lake voyage? What warning did Jesus give his disciples? How did they misinterpret his warning? (8:14-16)
9. What would have enabled the disciples to understand Jesus better? (8:17-18) What prevents us from understanding Jesus' teaching?
10. In verses 8:17-21, Jesus rebukes the disciples soundly, almost harshly. Would Jesus ever have occasion to rebuke you? What passages or ideas from the Bible have you struggled to understand? How can we guard against misinterpreting or ignoring the real message from the Scriptures?
11. If Jesus had been speaking to you personally, what negative example might he have warned you to watch out for or to learn from?

Mark 8:22-38 ~ Scripture Verses

The Healing of 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 go into the village." Peter's Confession of Christ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Mark 8:22-38 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What did the people do about the blind man's condition? Why do you think they did this? (8:22)
2. What did Jesus do? Why did he treat the blind man differently from others he had healed? Is there some connection between the gradual (two-step) healing and the disciples' slowness to understand Jesus? (8:21, 24-25)
3. Has there been a time when God only answered a part of your prayer? Why do you think he might not answer a prayer like we wanted? How do you respond?
4. Have you ever been changed by a touch from Jesus, but at some point (now, perhaps) needed a "second touch?" Do you know someone now who needs a "second touch?" How can you help this person? Encouragement? Accountability?

5. Who are you? (Or who am I?) Who would people say you are?
6. Why do you think that Jesus asked two questions in the order he did? (8:27, 29) Are we influenced by what others think?
7. What is your answer to Jesus' second question? (8:29) Why is it so important? Why is it important not to hide your faith in Christ?
8. Who rebuked whom? (8:32-33) Why did Peter rebuke Jesus two minutes after proclaiming "You are the Christ" and Jesus responding "And I tell you that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18)
9. In what way did Peter have in mind "the things of men?" What was wrong with his thinking? (8:33)
10. What did Jesus want his disciples to do? (8:34)
11. What does it mean to deny yourself? To take up your cross? To follow Christ?
12. In what way can a person both save his life and lose it at the same time? (8:35)
13. How did Jesus refer to the people to whom he was speaking? What does it mean to be ashamed of Christ? (8:38)
14. How can we make sure we have in mind the things of God?

Mark 9:2-13 ~ Scripture Verses

The Transfiguration

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.) Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!” Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant. And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

Mark 9:2-13 ~ Discussion Questions

1. When were you last speechless? What causes you to be speechless?
2. How do people react when they watch fireworks? Why?
3. Where did Jesus take Peter, James, and John? Why do you think he chose only three of his disciples to watch his transfiguration? If he chose three people from this room, would you be one of them? Why or why not?
4. What exactly does “transfigured” mean? There are three aspects to it. (Mark 9:3, 8:27-31, 2 Thessalonians 1:10)
5. Who appeared with Jesus during the transfiguration? What was significant about them? (Malachi 4:5-6, Mark 9:12)
6. How did Peter respond to the transformation? What did he want to do? How do you suppose you would have reacted? Have you ever been so surprised or “blown away” by some experience that you said or did something silly or absurd?
7. What did God say to the disciples with Jesus? What did he want them to do? (Mark 9:7, James 1:22-25)
How often has God, the Father, spoken directly to people in the Old Testament? The New Testament?

8. What is implied to you personally by God's command that we listen to Jesus?
9. What orders did Jesus give the disciples when they were coming down the mountain? (9:9) What did they do? (9:10) How does this contrast with other people Jesus told not to say anything about a miracle or healing?
10. What did the three disciples discuss among themselves coming down? (9:10)
11. The disciples asked Jesus about Elijah (9:11) and Jesus answered that he had already come. Huh? Who was he speaking about? What does this mean? (9:12-13)
12. What is the key message in the story of the transfiguration? (Hint: remember the most important question in the Bible that we looked at last week, i.e., Jesus asking, "who do you say I am?" Mark 8:29)

Mark 9:14-32 ~ Scripture Verses

The Healing of a Boy With an Evil Spirit

When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him. “What are you arguing with them about?” he asked. A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.” “O unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.” So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?” “From childhood,” he answered. “It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.” “‘If you can’?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for him who believes.” Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the evil spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?” He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

The Second Passion prediction

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

Mark 9:14-32 ~ Discussion Questions

1. While the three disciples were up on Mt. Hermon with Jesus, what problem were the other nine having? How did they deal with it?
2. Why might the people have been overwhelmed with wonder when they saw Jesus? (Generally, it is after a miracle when the people express wonder.)
3. What do you suppose the disciples and Pharisees were arguing about? (9:14)
4. As the boy’s father, how would you feel during this argument? How do you relate to this today?
5. Why were the disciples unable to cast out the demon? How did Jesus feel at this point? (9:19)

6. What was the boy's life like up until this time? (9:22)
7. Jesus' response, "If you can?" in Verse 9:23 is almost contemptuous. In the second part of that verse "...him who believes" who is Jesus speaking of? (A) himself, (B) his disciples, (C) the boy's father, (D) whoever is listening?
8. The response of the boy's father in 9:24 seems to be a contradiction. How can you have faith and not have faith? Have you ever felt like this? How are prayer and faith related?
9. In what area of your life do you struggle with doubt? How has God helped you overcome your unbelief in the past? Or hasn't he?
10. When do you learn more: during spiritual highs or lows? Give an example. (James 1:2-8)
11. This story is about faith: lack of faith of the disciples and the faith of the boy's father that needed strengthening. What exactly is faith and what are the consequences with God of having or not having faith? (Hebrews 11:1, 6)
12. What news did Jesus repeat privately to the disciples? (9:31) What's are the differences between this time and the previous time he told them? (8:31-32) What is significant about the differences?

Mark 9:33-50 ~ Scripture Verses

Who Is the Greatest?

They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the twelve and said, “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” He took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Recognize Your Allies

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.

Warnings From Jesus About Sin and Hell

“And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ Everyone will be salted with fire. “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

Mark 9:33-50 ~ Discussion Questions

1. What does the disciples' argument tell you about their understanding of who Jesus was and why he had come? As a disciple, how would you feel when Jesus asked about the argument you were having? (9:33-34)
2. How did Jesus explain what it means to be great? (9:35) What does it really mean to be a servant of all? [Some translations say, “slave of all.”] How can you become a “servant of all” in your everyday activities?
3. Do you think most government and business leaders today behave or inspire others in the way Jesus said a leader should be? How about church leaders?
4. When Jesus gave the example about little children (9:36-37), do you think he was speaking only about children? Who else might be included?
5. What issue concerned the disciples in 9:38? What did they try to do about it?

6. As believers today, what issues do we tend to be divided about? How do you think God views the various denominations the Christian church has divided into?
7. In Verses 9:39-41, what principles was Jesus trying to teach the disciples? Specifically, consider verse 9:41: who was to be helped, what help was to be given, and what was the reward? How does this apply to you today?
8. Some writers think Jesus was referring to all new believers in 9:42. What does the Bible say about causing others to stumble? (See Matthew 18:6, 10, 14, Romans 14:13, Romans 15:1, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, 1 Timothy 2:9-10, 2 Timothy 2:15)
9. How do you think a Christian can cause others to sin? In what ways is causing another person to sin worse than sinning yourself?
10. Why did Jesus use an extreme example in this context? (9:43-47)
11. What's the meaning of Verse 9:49? [Some translations say, "For everyone will be tested with fire and every sacrifice will be salted with salt."]
12. What does the "salt" in Verses 9:49-50 represent?
13. How does Jesus' admonition to be at peace with each other relate to 9:42-49?