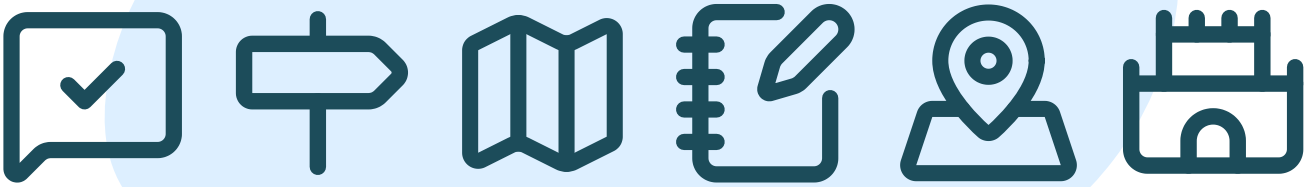
GETTING TO KNOW JESUS

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

WEEKDAY LIVING

Weekday Living



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BEST PRACTICES FOR CONVERSATION GROUPS

- Do your best to read a portion of the passage and guidebook each day.
- Try to meet together once a week for a conversation.
  - When and where will you meet?

- Take the time to pray for those in your Conversation Group. There is a page at the end of the guidebook to record prayer requests.
- Be thinking about who you know that might be interested in joining the conversation.
- Be thinking about how you can live as salt and light during the weekdays.
- No certificates or credits will be earned. Do your best. This is your life. We are trying to create an unstoppable pattern of a thriving weekday faith. Offer yourself lots of grace, stick with it, and trust God.



WHAT MAKES CONVERSATION STARTERS UNIQUE?

Objective

The most important endeavor in all of life is to enjoy a vibrant spiritual life. When our spiritual lives are heading in the right direction all of life goes better. While our challenges will not be erased, spiritual vitality provides needed direction and fulfillment.

Approach

- **The content is Bible-based, yet scripture is not embedded in the curriculum.** We want to help you learn both from the Bible and about the Bible. Bibles can also include helpful items like maps, timelines, and other verses for reference. All of which can transform the Bible from an ancient book that is challenging to engage into a dynamic collection of stories you embrace.

- **The content intends to be accessible to all regardless of spiritual background with unlimited growth expansion as you mature.** Everyone starts in a different place yet we are all headed in the same direction. One story in the Bible can contain inspiration and direction that lasts a lifetime.

- **For centuries the Bible stories were passed from one generation to the next by having important conversations in the home and among peers.** There would be holidays and festivals established to retell important parts of faith history. It would take thousands of years until the printing press was invented and the Bible would become mass produced. The content you experience is intended for one on one or one with a few type conversations with those you know and trust.

- **Conversations Groups are intended to self-multiply as you are inspired in your faith desiring to share with those you know and trust.** The path toward God and with God is best experienced with those closest to us. Jesus found twelve friends then they shared their experience over many decades across the ancient world as their lives travelled to different places. Ultimately the story of Jesus has made it to us so we keep the tradition alive by sharing it with others.

- **Conversation Groups are intended to help you be fruitful by living as salt and light during the weekdays.** (We encourage you to rest over the weekend and serve your local church.) Being busy is different than being productive. Just as we long for inner peace and contentment, humans also long to live fulfilling lives. Every weekday we traffic with people and by people who need encouragement. Sometimes just a simple word is needed, other times an act of service is most appropriate. You might even feel compelled to serve alongside others through a local nonprofit cause. Giving is receiving. It is a powerful expression that not only helps others, but expands personal joy.

OUTCOMES

WE HOPE YOU LEARN FROM THE BIBLE.

WE HOPE YOU LEARN ABOUT THE BIBLE.

WE HOPE YOU FEEL CONFIDENT AND RESPONSIBLE TO CHASE A VIBRANT SPIRITUAL LIFE.

WE HOPE YOU FEEL INSPIRED TO LIVE DURING YOUR WEEKDAYS AS SALT AND LIGHT.

WE HOPE YOU FEEL INSPIRED TO INVITE OTHERS TO LEARN WITH YOU IN THE FUTURE.

LETS GET STARTED

GETTING THE KNOW JESUS
THE GOSPEL OF MARK

The central figure in Christianity is Jesus Christ, so we should get to know him. While it is common to explore Jesus from the point of his death and resurrection–which ultimately proves his divinity–we will instead reverse-engineer the conversation. Let's start at the beginning, and get to know Jesus as a man with a mission. Everything he did had a clear purpose and direction from day one. Ultimately, his life and mission would touch the lives of all humanity throughout history—including you, your family, and your friends.

Jesus was not born into a vacuum. There was a political world (the Roman Empire) and a religious world (Judaism). These would prove to be significant players in his story. Jesus never flew under the radar. From day one, many forces were against him, but he was in charge for his entire lifetime.

There was a way about him that is important to grasp. This way of life can inform our faith and weekday living. He had a job, family, and friends. The poor, the children, and the powerful all interfaced with Jesus on a regular basis. He travelled. He cried. He slept and slipped away. He ate, he drank, he visited homes, he went to synagogue, and he enjoyed an occasional boat ride.

Jesus had lots of enemies and a few friends. A large crowd would cheer him, but more would reject him. Angels, demons, and Satan appear throughout the story, reminding us that Jesus' life was about far more than practical wisdom and moral teaching. When he spoke, people were struck–even astonished–by his authority. They had never experienced anyone like Jesus.

Now, it is our turn to read his story and their stories. Let's get to know Jesus from beginning to end: the Monday-Friday version with Easter Sunday as the big ending.

01

LESSON 1

THE BEGINNING OF MANY THINGS

MARK 1

OVERVIEW

Mark, the gospel writer, is a man of few words and lots of facts. For him, the beginning of Jesus' life didn't involve a sweet young couple and manger scene. It began with confirming that Jesus was set apart from the prophets, John the Baptist's message, and the voice of God over his baptism.

Chapter 1 introduces us to almost everything we will learn about Jesus over his lifetime. He had a clear message regarding the kingdom of God. This kingdom would have both enemies and fans. Jesus was nothing close to ordinary. Satan knew the day he arrived and was out to get him.

However, Jesus needed to get his message circulated widely and cemented in a small group of people that would carry it forward after his mission was complete. This chapter contains a little bit of everything we will read over the 16 chapters of the gospel of Mark. Jesus encounters opposition, he heals, he gathers people, he instructs, he rests, and he exposes darkness.

Don't miss the urgency of it all. Throughout Mark's Gospel, words such as 'immediately' and phrases like 'right away' and 'as soon as' appear repeatedly, giving the narrative a sense of relentless momentum. Jesus went everywhere with purpose. He did not drift through life; he went straight at it. So should we.

01

LESSON 1

THE BEGINNING OF MANY THINGS

MARK 1

OUTLINE

Mark 1:1-11

The stage is set that Jesus' arrival on earth was unique. It was preceded by prophets of old and now John the Baptist. He would remind people of their messages. Nothing is said about Jesus' first thirty years of life in Mark's gospel. The focus is his unique calling and purpose. Let there be no mystery: the voice of God is over Jesus as is clearly recorded at his baptism.

Mark 1:12-13

Satan is introduced very early. He is real. He is the opposition. He knows what is at stake in the mission of Jesus. The spiritual world exists and it affects us everyday–not just us, but everyone, including those we know and love.

Mark 1:14-15

This is the succinct message of John the Baptist and Jesus. The good news is that the kingdom of heaven has arrived. All we need to do is believe and repent.

Mark 1:16-20

Jesus begins to gather his closest followers. He recruits 12 of them. They are referred to as disciples or apostles. The twist is that he does not rush toward the religious leaders. He goes to the common workplace of the boat docks looking for some regular people, like fishermen.

01

LESSON 1
THE BEGINNING OF MANY THINGS
MARK 1

OUTLINE

Mark 1:21-28

This is a shocking scene. Jesus enters the synagogue. He finds a demon-possessed man in the gathering. Jesus' authority is obvious to everyone. He is clearly distinct from the religious leaders in the room. There is a supernatural deliverance. Satan is defeated twice in one chapter. The people who witness all of this are blown away. How about you?

Mark 1:29-34

Well, this did not take long. What happened in the synagogue now unfolds in front of Simon Peter's childhood home. The movement surrounding Jesus is gaining momentum and will not be stopped by those who oppose it.

Mark 1:35-38

Here are two patterns to note moving forward. Jesus repeatedly retreats for private moments with his disciples. Also, he never stays in one place too long. His mission is always on the move.

Mark 1:39-45

Rinse and repeat. Arrive at a new town, teach, heal, and retreat.

01

LESSON 1

THE BEGINNING OF MANY THINGS

MARK 1



OUTCOME

What inspired you from the reading?

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Let's think about people we might want to start a conversation with in the future because we think they would enjoy it and find it helpful.

Let's think about how we can live as salt and light in our everyday lives.

CONVERSATION NOTES

02

LESSON 2
MISUNDERSTANDINGS
MARK 2

OVERVIEW

As Jesus goes about his normal life it is be quite abnormal to those witnessing it. Despite over 4,000 years of past history of God being at work in the world among his people, Jesus displaying supernatural authority and revealing divine teaching are beyond human comprehension. It is going to take some processing for people to embrace the full experience of God's son walking among humankind.

Everyone is a work in progress. Some follow fast, despite understanding little. Others quickly reject him and become increasingly opposed to him as time goes on. A few are miraculously healed while anciently-held religious practices are reinterpreted. Pretty much everyone and everything gets turned upside down and inside out by the time his journey is complete.

As Jesus goes about his day things just happen. Every day feels normal to him, but they are filled with surprises to those in his presence. How will they respond? Will he be understood or misunderstood? What will we do with the distinct advantage of looking back on it all?

02

LESSON 2
MISUNDERSTANDINGS
MARK 2

OUTLINE

Mark 2:1-12

Can you get a visual of Jesus being in his hometown at his home base? Both humanity and divinity are on full display. I can imagine Jesus is sitting on the couch just about to take an afternoon nap when the crowd arrives. The audacity of the crowd to press in and hear Jesus despite personal inconvenience is remarkable, but it is surpassed by four men who rip off a roof.

Jesus offers forgiveness, which cannot be seen or immediately proven. However, the priority of forgiveness is what he wants to communicate. It also sets up the next moment. Only God can forgive, which creates a misunderstanding. So Jesus responds with unmistakable authority by healing the man, showing that he can address both the inside and outside of our lives like nothing people had ever seen before.

Jesus was okay with being inconvenienced. He was okay with being misunderstood, even questioned. The impression of urgency appears again as he responds immediately and right away. Everyone is trying to figure him out.

Mark 2:13-17

Jesus goes about his day and calls Matthew while he is at work. Earlier he had called fishermen; now he calls an accountant. Once again, it is not a priest, scribe, or religious leader, but an ordinary person. Matthew invites him into his home to meet his friends. This is a bold move because of his friend group and roofs tend to be torn off of homes when Jesus arrives. The reputations of the new friends Jesus is making creates a problem for the religious leaders. How can he teach in the synagogue with authority yet hang out with people like this?

02

LESSON 2
MISUNDERSTANDINGS
MARK 2

OUTLINE

Mark 2:18-22

This instruction on fasting is very eye-opening for the religious leaders. Jesus values its practice when his presence is not right in front of them. You fast as a dedicated time to get closer to God focusing upon him. However, when he is standing right in front of you it is not needed. Just look up and listen. This was a new application. A re-interpretation of a highly esteemed religious practice. It could have been a really good moment for them to take a step forward.

Fasting is an important part of faith today. Jesus isn't standing in front of us like he is in this story so we need to fast periodically to refocus our faith.

Mark 2:23-28

The Sabbath is another ancient religious practice where Jesus is bringing new insights. Once a week, God commanded that his people rest with him. It is actually the first spiritual discipline ever mentioned in the Bible on day 7 of creation. Adam and God rested together. It was considered a holy day. Later this becomes one of the Ten Commandments. However, its intended purpose had lost its meaning over time. Jesus uses this moment to remind them, humans need a day of rest with their Lord. It is not a day to merely check a box of attending a religious service.

02

LESSON 2
MISUNDERSTANDINGS
MARK 2

OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

03

LESSON 3
FRIENDS, FOES, AND FAMILY
MARK 3

OVERVIEW

This chapter is fairly straightforward with a couple of mysterious secrets. For the straightforward part, we are going to read about different groups of people and their level of receptivity to Jesus. We will also experience a level beyond rejection toward becoming arch enemies.

The religious leaders and Satan will appear again. Their stance is fairly obvious. Then we encounter the crowds, the disciples, those needing a miracle, and Jesus' family all of which are on some path of receptivity.

We are in the first year of Jesus' public ministry and it did not take long before people chose sides. Of course, all of us are still choosing sides today.

03

LESSON 3
FRIENDS, FOES, AND FAMILY
MARK 3

OUTLINE

Mark 3:1-6
You would expect the religious crowd—those representing God's people in Israel and following his prescribed way of life—to be the easiest audience to win over. However, that expectation proves to be wrong. This passage is filled with alarming expressions like grief, anger, hardness of heart, and even plans to kill. Not exactly what you would expect in a synagogue—the center of local religious life.

Mark 3:7-12
The crowds were a completely different story. These people were exploring and discovering faith. This is where Jesus found the most freedom to heal and teach. The word about him has spread across the ancient world and people are travelling distances just to experience him. Even the demons confess the truth about Jesus as the Son of God. What a contrast to the synagogue scene.

Mark 3:13-19
Going up to the top of a mountain is a well known place to meet with God. For example, it is where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Jesus taking 12 men to a place like this cannot be understated. They were meeting with God in the flesh. However, do not let it skip past you that Jesus is gathering with 12 regular people who have been following him for a short period of time.
Did you notice what he calls them to do? Do you see what authority he gives them? The qualifications for starting important conversations and living as salt and light are pretty minimal if you think about it. There is far more that the disciples did not know about Jesus than what they confidently knew. Be encouraged.

03

LESSON 3
FRIENDS, FOES, AND FAMILY
MARK 3

OUTLINE

Mark 3:20-30

I hope you are enjoying the pattern that is developing of Jesus dropping by homes. I often think about these homes and what it was like for the homeowner. Of course the day of his visit was crazy, but what about after the resurrection of Jesus? Were they turned into local shrines or amusement parks for places the Son of God ate and slept? Did they auction off a fork he touched or a chair he sat in?

Did you notice that the religious leaders are now a part of the crowd following Jesus? Only they are not fans, but active enemies of his mission. Jesus makes it clear that he has come to do the work of the kingdom. His kingdom stands against the work of Satan. He is not against the sinners or the religious leaders. He is against evil that seeks to deceive and destroy those God loves.

There are a few things in this section of scripture that create intrigue or confusion. Questions like ‘what is the spiritual world like’ or ‘what is meant by blaspheming the Holy Spirit’ may come to mind. Feel free to take the time to explore both if you like, but it is always best to first gain a broad understanding of a passage before diving deep into a specific topic. It is okay to read something and not fully understand it. Just make a list of things you want to come back to at the end of this study.

Mark 3:31-35

Do you think this conversation was heartbreaking for Mary and Jesus' family to hear? Mary could have cried a little on the inside while Jesus’ siblings could have easily gotten mad. However, Jesus had a bigger point to make as we end this chapter on friends and foes. Everyone could be a part of his family. This is the best news of all.

03

LESSON 3
FRIENDS, FOES, AND FAMILY
MARK 3

OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

04

LESSON 4
SEEDS OF FAITH
MARK 4

OVERVIEW

Jesus is on the move again and the crowds are growing. As you read, you might focus on all the teachings about seeds, which is the obvious intent for the crowds of listeners. They have yet to fully embrace belief in Jesus.

However, there is a second objective under the surface. Jesus is seeking to train his Apostles in the next level of revelation. He teaches the crowds by telling a story, but privately explains the story in detail to the disciples. He might even chastise them a little, then he puts them through a physical test.

Jesus desires us to hear, but more so he wants measurable efforts of listening, pursuing, processing, and applying his words. All of this will come to light just under the surface of the parables as you read.

04

LESSON 4
SEEDS OF FAITH
MARK 4

OUTLINE

Mark 4:1-9
Jesus' common way of teaching was through parables. He told a story his audience would be familiar with seeking to reveal a spiritual truth. This parable is from agriculture regarding how seeds work when they are planted. In just a few verses he explains the unique outcomes of different seeds. Not all grow to produce their maximum level of fruit. This parable repeats the same word at the beginning and end, “listen.”

Mark 4:10-12
These verses have both a light and dark side. Jesus is revealing spiritual things to everyone. Some lean in, discovering what is referred to as secrets of Jesus’ kingdom. Others do not lean in, they do not receive the secrets, and they do not repent.

Mark 4:13–20
Jesus challenges the disciples at this point. It would appear that given the time he spent with them his expectation is that they could understand the secrets. However, they did not. So Jesus explains in detail. As you read moving forward, take note that Jesus continues to support his followers by helping them grow a persistent listening effort.

I do love how detailed Jesus gets with the common life experiences that choke the seeds, like distress, worry, deceit, and desire. The human experience in the first century is surprisingly similar to the modern world.

Please do not miss the presence of Satan again. He is a repeated character both in Jesus' experience and now in his efforts of sowing spiritual seeds in the lives of real people like you and me.

04

LESSON 4
SEEDS OF FAITH
MARK 4

OUTLINE

Mark 4:21-25
Jesus turns to instructing them on their listening effort moving forward. He is seeking to reveal spiritual truths to his followers. We must listen, pay attention, and put forth a measure of effort that is equal to the task. Jesus isn't withholding spiritual insights. He is seeking to train our spiritual muscles to be able to handle more in the future than we can grasp today.

Mark 4:26-34
Jesus continues with multiple parables about seeds. The seeds that have not been choked or died ultimately produce valuable fruit. This fruit is a place of respite for others as well as producing an abundant harvest of good. Spiritual seeds are good for us personally, but they also produce good for those around us.

This section closes with a leadership practice giving us insight into what was ahead. Jesus speaks to the crowds seeking to gain believers. The disciples were already believers and followers, each one bearing the title of apostle. In just a few short years, they become the leaders and teachers of the crowds and believers. Jesus needed them to know the detailed meanings of the parables to propel his future mission. Ultimately, they were instrumental in recording his teachings in books like the gospel of Mark which you are currently reading.

Jesus reached people, trained leaders, and prepared for the future to insure the successful completion of his movement.

Mark 4:35-41
Part of Jesus' training was real life experience. At this point in time, how strong was the faith of the disciples? How clear was their understanding? Of course, Jesus knew the answers. He also knew a storm was needed to reveal the answers to his Apostles. They immediately go to the worst case scenario of death. Then they are comforted by Jesus' miracle of calming the storm. This is shortly followed by the realization that just because they are counted among the twelve, does not mean they automatically understand.

04

LESSON 4
SEEDS OF FAITH
MARK 4

OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

05

LESSON 5

FOR EVERYONE AND OVER EVERYTHING
MARK 5

OVERVIEW

This chapter is fun. Pigs play a big role and Mark uses a literary device called a Markan Sandwich. First, let's unpack the Markan Sandwich, because it has already been leveraged once in this book and will be again. Oftentimes, Mark breaks up one story into two parts while inserting another story in the middle. The pattern is A1-B-A2. The outer story and inner story help interpret each other. For instance, we previously read Mark 3:20-35. A1 is when Jesus' family thinks he is out of his mind (Mark 3:20-21). B is where Jesus exposes the conflict of kingdoms and a divided house (Mark 3:22-30). The conclusion is A2 as Jesus teaches about his real family (Mark 3:31-35).

Notice in our current reading of Mark 5 the story of the synagogue leader's daughter stops and starts with the healing of a woman in the middle. Be sure to read them in light of each other to gather their most full meaning.

Finally, we have multiple interactions in this chapter with varied responses. Don't miss that Jesus displays authority over demons, physical illness, and ultimately death. He encounters a man that was outcast from society, a religious leader, and a woman who has run out of options. Jesus is there in dramatic fashion for everyone and everything.

05

LESSON 5

FOR EVERYONE AND OVER EVERYTHING
MARK 5

OUTLINE

Mark 5:1-20
Jesus is on the move again. This would be a good time to look at a map of Jesus' journeys. You will discover he spent a lot of time in and around the Sea of Galilee. After this particular boat ride he meets a man that has been kicked out of town. He is a danger to himself and others. It is another encounter with evil forces. These forces are never in doubt as to who Jesus is and the authority he has.

The pigs are a fun part of the story. They could seem irrelevant, yet they prove by their behavior that Jesus did cast the demons out. Both the formerly demon-possessed man and the pig farmer get a story. Jesus encourages sharing their personal experience, presumably because he knows the area of Decapolis needs to hear it.

Mark 5:21-24
This is the bread of the Markan Sandwich. Remember the religious leaders had begun plotting to kill Jesus. Yet, this synagogue leader has a different view of him. This is a desperate and brave man.

Mark 5:25-34
Speaking of desperate, this lady had exhausted all her options. Jesus was busy, she probably felt devalued as a woman and did not want to interrupt his activities. However, if she could just touch his robe she had faith it would work and it did. The bigger surprise to her was that Jesus noticed her. She went from being healed to being saved for all eternity. Feeling better now is important to us, but being delivered from eternal separation from God is important to Jesus. That is the meat of the Markan Sandwich.

Mark 5:35-43
Now for the final piece of bread. Jesus waited for a large crowd to gather around the religious leader's home. If Jairus was going to ask, Jesus was going to display. This had the chance to propel his message forward inside the religious community. It would contrast the propaganda being promoted against him. After the miracle, Jesus gave strict orders to tell no one. Presumably, because this community was already familiar with his message and the growing crowd against him did not need to get any larger. Jesus must complete his mission on his own terms.

05

LESSON 5

FOR EVERYONE AND OVER EVERYTHING
MARK 5



OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

06

LESSON 6

HALFWAY, NO WAY, ALL THE WAY

MARK 6

OVERVIEW

We are squarely in the middle of the public portion of Jesus' ministry. Patterns are be repeated and decisions are being made. He goes to some familiar places doing familiar things. Now that his message is settling in, people are making choices with lasting consequences.

Faith is a process. It is a journey. However, it is clearly marked by decisions. When our faith is private it is very convenient. It serves us well as it offers forgiveness and peace. However, when our faith goes public it takes real courage. The faith decisions in this chapter are decidedly public. Let's be encouraged to make bold decisions even if it means failure at times.

06

LESSON 6

HALFWAY, NO WAY, ALL THE WAY
MARK 6

OUTLINE

Mark 6:1-6

Jesus is following some well-traveled patterns of behavior. He is back in his home region with his disciples, teaching in the synagogue, and his family is nearby. One might expect that things would be different this time—that faith would be more developed than when he was last there. One might even expect his teaching to be received at a deeper level of maturity. But that is not the case.

When people heard Jesus teach they were amazed. In return, when Jesus saw their stunted faith he was equally amazed. If you have time, you might glance back over Mark 1-5 to see what patterns you can find in Jesus' experience with his hometown and family. His expectation of faith development was different from his current experience. Growth opportunities are obviously being missed. We can make the choice to not repeat this history of stunted faith growth in our own lives.

Mark 6:7-13

Patterns continue to be repeated with next step expectations. Jesus had previously called his disciples (Mark 1:16-20) and commissioned them to join him in the gospel mission (Mark 3:11-19). Now they had the opportunity to take a growth step forward by going in pairs without a lot of supplies. They would encounter both positive and negative decisions of others just like Jesus. They also experienced the supernatural.

Mark 6:14-29

John the Baptist comes back on the scene for a brief, yet very tragic moment. He was incarcerated for not compromising his faith. The price of integrity was high. There is a lot to be learned from this story. Faith calls for hard decisions in life. All decisions have consequences. John the Baptist stands in contrast to those in Jesus' hometown. He serves as an inspiration to the disciples.

Another layer to grasp is the Roman empire. It is squarely against the message of Christianity. They have joined the religious community of Judaism. Both cultures produce many deaths of Christians throughout the remainder of the New Testament. Jesus will be next, then the disciples along with many others.

06

LESSON 6
HALFWAY, NO WAY, ALL THE WAY
MARK 6

OUTLINE

Mark 6:30-44
There are several repeated patterns in this story. Jesus meets privately with the disciples, they take a boat ride, people gather, teaching occurs, and miracles abound. What can you learn from Jesus' repeated patterns in life? Did you notice he had the disciples report on their two-by-two experiences? Jesus is calling, teaching, and training their faith. His ministry is passing the halfway point. Growth needs to take root in his followers. They will become the leaders soon.

This miracle of feeding the five thousand is an experience for the day, but also a teaching he will refer back to in the future. What do they learn?

Mark 6:45-52
It is time for a public test of faith. Nothing in this scene is unfamiliar. Jesus gets away privately, the disciples jump in a boat, and the waters get rough. Do you remember the previous story of Jesus and the disciples in a boat during a storm? How would the disciples faith show development this time? Will their two-by-two experiences and the feeding of the 5,000 catapult them to the next level?

We can gain comfort that humans will be humans. Growing faith is hard. It is marked both by private and public failure. Jesus sees both, but proves to them that he never gives up.

Mark 6:53-56
The crowds continue to grow. Their response to Jesus is a contrast to those in his hometown and to the Roman politicians. The disciples are in the midst of it all trying to work their faith into life practice. Put yourself in the story. You have been with them throughout this journey. Where do you find yourself today? Halfway, no way, all the way, or maybe confidently on the way.

06

LESSON 6

HALFWAY, NO WAY, ALL THE WAY
MARK 6

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CONVERSATION NOTES

07

LESSON 7
WHEN RELIGION HURTS
MARK 7

OVERVIEW

We can learn about the gospel writer Mark in this chapter as well as some of the common deceptions of religion. From other books in the New Testament, we know that Mark traveled across the ancient world with Peter and Paul–even as far as Rome–to spread the good news about Jesus. In this chapter you can tell he is writing to both a Jewish and Gentile audience by the way he exposes and explains Jewish religious traditions.

Mark 7 has two heroes and one villain. The Jewish religious leaders continue to play the role of a villain. The outsider Gentile mom along with a deaf man are the heroes of real faith. The disciples continue to learn.

07

LESSON 7
WHEN RELIGION HURTS
MARK 7

OUTLINE

Mark 7:1-13
The religious leaders are pursuing Jesus, not for their own spiritual development, but to undermine his movement. Jesus points out their selective hearing when it comes to the words of God. In reality, they have exchanged God's commands for human tradition, picking and choosing what is personally validating. This even extends to the extreme of not serving their parents by dedicating their resources to God in a way that allows them to skirt their responsibilities within those traditions. Yet even common sense people, and those without faith, know to care for parents when they are in need. In doing so, these religious leaders have created a system that protects and validates themselves.

Do not miss that Jesus knows God's word, what they are doing, and why they are doing it. They are caught and publicly exposed as fakes.

Mark 7:14-16
Jesus turns to the listening audience, the crowd. He declares we have two entities needing care, a physical life and a spiritual life. Do not confuse eating healthy with growing a spiritually healthy life. The religious leaders were focused on what people could see, not their hearts which only God could see.

Mark 7:17-23
The previous patterns continue. Jesus enters a home, the disciples need help to understand, and Jesus explains the meaning behind his words which in the future end up in the gospel of Mark for us to read.

07

LESSON 7
WHEN RELIGION HURTS
MARK 7

OUTLINE

Mark 7:24-30

Do you know where the ancient region of Tyre is located? It can be educational to see how many different directions Jesus traveled to spread his message. This Gentile woman stands in stark contrast to the Jewish religious leaders. You can imagine how important this chapter is for Mark's audience, likely in Rome and far from Jerusalem, the center of Jewish religious life. Jesus isn't being mean or calling her a dog. He is revealing that his kingdom benefits are for everyone. The people of Israel are not exclusive in this regard. They get rebuked and exposed. Her family gets delivered from evil.

Mark 7:31-37

Jesus is on the move again. What direction does your map say he is headed this time? The impossibility factor of healing a deaf and mute man seems very high. However, keeping him quiet after the fact proves to be the more difficult task.

The deaf hear, the mute speak, the Gentiles are delivered, and the religious leaders stay trapped.

07

LESSON 7
WHEN RELIGION HURTS
MARK 7



OUTCOME

What inspired you from the reading?

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Did you find an interesting map or history timeline fact?

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CONVERSATION NOTES

08

LESSON 8
NEXT LEVEL REVELATIONS
MARK 8

OVERVIEW

This chapter creates a major transition in Jesus' ministry. The end of his life on earth is clearly in sight. No one knows it is coming and they certainly are not able to grasp its significance. There is a demand for a sign, hardness of heart will be exposed, and blindness will be addressed.

In this one chapter he seeks to take everyone he encounters to their next level of understanding or call them to account for what they already know. Jesus begins to reveal his future in no uncertain terms. He calls faith to a high expectation for those who desire to follow him. There is comfort for the crowd and confrontation for those who need to move forward. The conversation gets more serious than ever as the pending deadline of his cross is close.

08

LESSON 8
NEXT LEVEL REVELATIONS
MARK 8

OUTLINE

Mark 8:1-10
This is a second miraculous feeding (See Mark 6:30-44). Previously Jesus alerted them to a hardness of heart following their last experience (See Mark 6:52). What have the disciples learned?

I love that Jesus was moved by compassion over the crowd. He was concerned with both their physical and spiritual needs, while the disciples needed a next step in their faith development as leaders.

Mark 8:11-13
It is scary to think about the courage it takes to argue and test Jesus, the Son of God. It is ironic there were actual signs all around them–from miracles to prophecies to authoritative teaching. While Jesus has compassion on the crowd willing to spend days with them, these religious leaders get a different response. He sighs deeply and leaves.

Mark 8:14-21
The disciples are about to get a lesson from Jesus, combining the miraculous feeding and confrontation with the religious leaders. Jesus is going to refer back to the previous miraculous feeding as well, putting a bow on those teachings.

There may be some confusion about physical bread and the use of leaven. Leaven is an illustration of a small ingredient with a large influence. The culture of the Pharisees and Rome are a problem. Both play significant roles in Jesus' crucifixion, which he is about to reveal for the first time.

The disciples need to move forward from the lessons of the miraculous feeding to the future Jesus describes.

08

LESSON 8
NEXT LEVEL REVELATIONS
MARK 8

OUTLINE

Mark 8:22-26
This is a funny story for us with the spitting and half-healing. The blind man probably doesn't laugh. I wonder what went through his mind the moment he realized he was half healed? Hope and disappointment were probably present, possibly even frustration. However, Jesus was not done.

This blind man serves as an illustration of the entire chapter. People are seeing Jesus and his work, but it is not clear yet. It is fun to look back on the repetition of themes to see how Jesus is building his case. There have been multiple miraculous feedings as well as healing the deaf and blind (See Mark 7:31-36). Jesus had just mentioned the issue of deaf and blind in terms of spiritual clarity to the disciples (See Mark 8:8). He is hoping it is all coming together for them because the rest of this chapter is big time stuff.

Mark 8:27-30
It is test time. Jesus asks two extremely important questions. The disciples needed to learn about the crowds they would lead in the future. They also need to hear themselves take a step forward with a personal confession. Who is Jesus?

Mark 8:31-33
Jesus shoots straight about his future. Peter's previous bold confession is matched by a private rebuke of Jesus. My imagination conjures up something that sounds like this, "Hey Jesus, the guys and I have been talking about a different plan." Then Jesus turns to everyone for his rebuke. Conversation over.

Mark 8:34-38
Now that Jesus has talked about his future, he addresses their futures. As opposition to Jesus grows, the disciples get caught in the crossfire. They need to be ready. We are moving past the feel good miracles like the feeding of the thousands. Rocks are about to be thrown, arrests will be made, and a trial occurs. Buckle up.

08

LESSON 8

NEXT LEVEL REVELATIONS
MARK 8

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CONVERSATION NOTES

09

LESSON 9

STUMBLING FORWARD
MARK 9

OVERVIEW

Mark 9 begins with a wow moment. Jesus needs this new revelation about his future to grow in their hearts and minds. The disciples receive a private miracle on the top of the mountain that is unlike anything they have experienced to date. The kingdom of God has moved from being near to being here.

Throughout this chapter, we see the disciples make choices that could be defined as mistakes or failures. As they try to understand the next level of revelation Jesus is providing about himself, they often process their thinking out loud and appear to be clueless. Yet from the rest of the New Testament we know that, in the end, they faithfully follow Jesus at a high level.

Faith is hard and spiritual growth can be messy. I am glad we have chapters like this that encourage us to keep moving forward even as we struggle to grasp all that Jesus is and does.

09

LESSON 9

STUMBLING FORWARD
MARK 9

OUTLINE

Mark 9:1
The disciples witness the kingdom of God revealed privately, powerfully, and in multiple ways over their lifetimes. First, they see it privately on top of the mountain. Then, they experience it publicly in the resurrection of Jesus. Next, they are present when Jesus ascends to heaven. Finally, the church is birthed in their midst and rapidly expand across the ancient world.

Mark 9:2-13
This is a very famous story commonly known as the Mount of Transfiguration. Now that Jesus has revealed his future he needs to cement his authority. Jesus calls toward heaven as Moses and Elijah appear. Peter's spontaneous boldness shows courage despite being misplaced. Feel free to look up why Moses and Elijah are important characters in God's story. The final comment about Elijah in Mark 9:12-13 is a reference to John the Baptist.

Mark 9:14-29
Now, we move from Peter's misplaced comment to a failed attempt at a healing. Previously we read how Jesus gave the disciples his authority to perform miracles. However, this one did not go well and the failure was causing quite a public disturbance. Jesus strongly admonishes the disciples which obviously gets their attention. They are not discouraged, but instead pursue a deeper understanding privately in the home. The people also get a glimpse into the possibility of a resurrection from the dead which is going to be experienced by all in the near future.

Mark 9:30-32
Jesus reveals for the second time his death, burial, and resurrection. In between these two conversations we have seen the intensity of Jesus' teachings to the disciples gain momentum with the transfiguration in the middle as an exclamation point that this is serious stuff. The disciples struggle to grasp it all, but keep moving forward.

09

LESSON 9

STUMBLING FORWARD
MARK 9

OUTLINE

Mark 9:33-37

Jesus is back in the Capernaum home. He has been here before. Feel free to remind yourself of some of these previous stories. He knows the disciples have been in a private dialogue that needs public attention. One possibility is they misunderstood the Mount of Transfiguration thinking they would have places of prominence like Moses and Elijah. They are now seeing a future that is scaled up from their past journey with Jesus. However, full clarity has not arrived.

Faith is not about achieving a religious status. It is about becoming a servant. Humility is embraced as we are always in the process of learning, growing, and serving–never arriving. The image of a child is powerful. Intuitively, we know how to serve a child by making accommodations in our voice, stature, and temperament. This is a different posture of leadership they need to contemplate.

Mark 9:38-41

Here is an eye opener for all of us. Some people from the crowds who followed Jesus had gone all in. The disciples have been jolted by the transfiguration and failed miracle attempt; however, this shockwave seems to be on the same scale. They think they are doing right by stopping him. However, Jesus says we should not stop people who are serving the mission. God's work is not exclusive to us.

Mark 9:42-49

Jesus refers back to the children and tries to put a bow on all these experiences. Mark 9 is very similar to Mark 8. In both cases, after Jesus reveals his future, he seeks to raise the bar on faith. It is not something that simply feels peaceful on the inside, but calls for an aggressive commitment on the outside (See Mark 8:34-38).

09

LESSON 9

STUMBLING FORWARD
MARK 9



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CONVERSATION NOTES

10

LESSON 10

FROM PARABLES TO PRACTICAL
MARK 10

OVERVIEW

While we have enjoyed Jesus' parables, his time is now short. He is traveling to Jerusalem for the final week of his life. The disciples are going to experience rapid fire practicality as Jesus leverages past conversations to keep their faith moving forward.

The same characters appear: religious leaders, crowds, disciples, and an individual needing a miracle. Jesus is on the move as always, but this is not a business-as-usual chapter.

He will share for a third time about his final week of life. However, he starts to get more specific with the details so the disciples are ready. Is Jesus revisiting any conversations with you these days? What do you think he is getting you prepared to experience?

10

LESSON 10

FROM PARABLES TO PRACTICAL
MARK 10

OUTLINE

Mark 10:1-12

There is a lot we could explore in this small section of the story. Instead, let's focus on the religious leaders who keep trying to trap Jesus in violating their religious laws. The minute he does, he is arrested by them and tried for religious crimes. It is important to note that they cannot trap Jesus. They did not in the past, nor would they in the future. Jesus is in full control of every aspect of his life, even the ending. His mission is to give his life for us. It will not be taken away from him against his will.

Divorce has never been God's plan, just like a couple never dreams on their wedding day it could happen to them. Yet, the pain of divorce has always been present. Regarding the issue of divorce, please do not miss that Jesus quotes what God himself said at the very first marriage covenant of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:24. Jesus believed the Bible was accurate and true from cover to cover. You can too.

Mark 10:13-16

Jesus wants to make it clear his reference to serving a child in Mark 9:36-38 was more than an illustration or parable. It was a practical principle. A reminder of why faith exists. It is not just for the elite, like the religious leaders. Faith is for those who cannot even begin to understand it yet.

Mark 10:17-22

The opposite of a child could be a rich religious man. This gentleman has success, power, and authority. He also knows religion. As a matter of fact, he quotes several items that Jesus has previously mentioned like how you treat your parents and the sanctity of marriage. Yet, Jesus knows the very point of his hesitancy, the one thing that is bigger than his religion. He has placed a dangerous amount of power in his resources.

Jesus loved him and called him to follow, just like many others before him. The disciples witness a declarative decline to join the movement.

Mark 10:23-31

The disciples are moving forward in their faith. Jesus encourages them by uniting many past teachings like children, family, and the high calling of being a follower. Then he adds the benefits: not only is suffering ahead for the disciples, but also a hundred times the fruit and blessings, all the way into eternity. It is important to remember that Jesus did not start his leadership of the disciples with the good stuff of blessings. It begins with following, then growing; hard times and rewards beyond measure are all a part of the journey.

10

LESSON 10

FROM PARABLES TO PRACTICAL
MARK 10

OUTLINE

Mark 10:32-34
This is the most detailed look at what is ahead. The leading cultures of political Rome and religious Judaism become big players in future events. It is about to get hard for everyone, but the resurrection will be unstoppable.

Mark 10:35–45
James and John decide they are ready to integrate some of Jesus' recent teachings. They are ready to go all in with Jesus, as he had been asking, only to add the opportunity of sitting at his right hand. To be fair, James and John were two of the first four followers (see Mark 1:19), assuming some role of specialized leadership among the group of disciples. This could have felt like a natural outcome.

I do not sense that Jesus confronts them rudely. He alone knows what is ahead for them. They will give their lives for the faith. However, the other disciples are upset. Jesus calms the situation down, reminding them of a previous teaching regarding the greatest servant which he is about to demonstrate as an example to them. All disciples will follow in his footsteps in the future; they just do not know it yet.

Mark 10:46-52
It is okay to have fun with your imagination on this story. I hope people helped the blind man to his feet, but I am not sure. His disrobing may have been a discouragement, but he needed to be free to run to Jesus. I am not expecting a straight-line scamper, but I am inspired by his drive. Nothing was going to stop him from getting to Jesus.

On the surface, it is a simple story we are very familiar with by now. Looking deeper, it has powerful tones as this blind man confidently confesses in very religious terms referring to Jesus as the Son of David and Rabbi. His eyes are opened and he follows. Do you remember the rich man? His eyes were open the entire time as were the religious leaders at the beginning of the chapter, still they did not see clearly, nor did they follow.

10

LESSON 10

FROM PARABLES TO PRACTICAL
MARK 10



OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

11

LESSON 11

BEARING SPIRITUAL FRUIT
MARK 11

OVERVIEW

I believe the majority of people desire a thriving spiritual life that bears lasting fruit. We believe this kind of life would be personally helpful and would benefit others. However, most of us can be paralyzed when it comes to these two accomplishments. Jesus is about to address both, a thriving spiritual life and the enjoyable fruit that it produces.

This chapter contains another Markan Sandwich as the the story of the barren fig tree is separated into two parts with the cleansing of the temple in the middle. Remember, they help interpret one another.

Finally, Mark 1-10 covers multiple years of Jesus' public ministry. Mark 11-16 is a deep dive into the final week of his life which happens to be the biggest week in the history of the world.

11

LESSON 11

BEARING SPIRITUAL FRUIT
MARK 11

OUTLINE

Mark 11:1-11
The disciples have begun to grasp what Jesus has been teaching them. They obey him straightaway as it relates to the donkey. His teachings are taking root and bearing fruit. The crowds are also responsive to what they have experienced of Jesus' ministry. Their words of praise as they see the kingdom coming through the house of David are declarative on this day.

In the Old Testament it was promised in a covenant and prophesied over the future that the most famous king of Israel, David, would always have a king on the throne over God's people. Those in the crowd clearly know this fact and have tied it to Jesus' lineage being born of Joseph from the house of King David.

The expectation is this long-awaited promise is about to be fulfilled. However, Jesus' kingdom is not a political force overtaking Rome, but a spiritual reign gained by his death, burial, and resurrection. The crowds have no clue what the rest of the week will look like.

Mark 11:12-14
The barren fig tree is a symbol of the state of the Holy City of Jerusalem along with the active temple practices and actions of religious leaders. The lack of good fruit is a problem. Jesus is about to get specific in the verses ahead.

Mark 11:15-19
It was the season for religious festivals, namely the Passover. People come from across the ancient world to offer the required sacrifices. Some could transport their own sacrifices, while others had to purchase them on temple premises. It was a market scene inside the temple grounds that displeased Jesus. You can imagine the chaos often found in a public market mixed with poor product quality at an exuberant price.

This holy place was anything but holy. The opportunity to connect with God in a meaningful way was diminished. The fruit of religious leadership was clear. Jesus wonders how anyone can even pray here. Prayer is a great place to start when seeking to bear spiritual fruit. Jesus teaches on this again shortly.

11

LESSON 11

BEARING SPIRITUAL FRUIT
MARK 11

OUTLINE

Mark 11:20-26

We should never overlook the power of prayer. It is what Jesus expects to see in the temple and in their lives. If we are desiring spiritual fruit, start with praying specifically for yourself, family, and those around you. Let prayer be our first choice. Take note of this important teaching, trying to call it to remembrance when we get to the Garden of Gethsemane scene in Mark 14.

Mark 11:27-33

The religious leaders are on a mission. They try to get ahead of Jesus this time as he attends temple service. Their lives are bearing very sad fruit as dedicated religious people. They are blind. They are motivated. They are protecting themselves at all costs. Their influence over the people they should be leading well is going to result in tragic misleading in just a few days.

11

LESSON 11

BEARING SPIRITUAL FRUIT
MARK 11

OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

12

LESSON 12

RELIGION OR FAITH
MARK 12

OVERVIEW

Tradition holds a few things about the book of Mark that provide an important backdrop. It is widely held that Mark was writing the very first gospel record of Jesus Christ, largely to a non-Jewish audience that was experiencing tremendous persecution–both from traditional Jewish religious leaders and the Roman authorities. Historians believe it was written around the time the Roman Empire destroyed the temple in Jerusalem burning it to the ground in 70 AD.

Mark was witnessing the martyrdom of the disciples of Jesus in real time. The Apostle Paul was in prison in Rome having experienced a very similar arrest and trial as Jesus at the hands of the Jewish and Roman authorities. The story of Jesus needed to be told in written form so future generations could become followers. Mark was trying to assist with creating a record for history while encouraging believers to not give up the faith despite being under attack.

This is important because Mark makes sure we know the distinct audiences in culture that Jesus challenged. Mark 12 is getting specific. Then, it ends with an unnamed hero of faith who went all-in, despite having so much against her. Her faith stands the test of time against the misguided religious leaders of her day.

12

LESSON 12

RELIGION OR FAITH
MARK 12

OUTLINE

Mark 12:1-12
This chapter centers around multiple conversations Jesus has with different groups of people gathered in the temple. The master teacher is about to expose the deceit of several groups. They know without a doubt this parable is about them.

Dating back to the Old Testament, God provided his message of repentance through the prophets, then John the Baptist, and now his one and only son, Jesus. Their teachings were historically not well-received. They were rejected, beaten, and killed. These religious leaders were about to repeat history.

As you read this chapter Jesus quotes several Old Testament verses. You might find it a helpful practice to locate these verses in their original placement. Remember the printing press had not been invented and the verses being quoted are hundreds of years old. They were contained on a set of scrolls stored in the temple as well as committed to the memory of the people.

Mark 12:13-17
The Pharisees are a specific group of Jewish religious leaders. The Herodians are a political group aligned with the Roman Empire and King Herod. While the Pharisees were very influential, they did not have political power to arrest, convict, and sentence for crimes. They needed the assistance of the Romans to terminate Jesus' life. This attempt would fail to meet their objective.

Mark 12:18-27
The Sadducees are a different group of Jewish religious leaders. They are going to attempt to trap Jesus. They fail just like all the others. There is so much about religion, faith, and the ways of God we do not understand. It can be pretty easy to find ourselves lost in the minutia of the details on one particular subject that is used to trip up a genuine faith journey. Today, those outside the faith can seek something small to discount the historical life of Jesus. Jesus can handle any opposition.

The reference to the fathers of the Jewish faith like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is very important. The Jewish leaders and people revered these men as a very significant part of their journey as the people of God. They were in the lineage of Jesus prior to King David. God made a promise of faith to them long before these Sadducees and Pharisees existed. These promises, made to the fathers of faith, were kept by God long after their deaths and are still being kept today.

12

LESSON 12

RELIGION OR FAITH
MARK 12

OUTLINE

Mark 12:28-34
Another religious leader, a scribe, engages in the conversation. This man appears to take a more friendly approach. Both Jesus and the scribe agree on the truthfulness of the greatest commandments. However, a gap remains when it comes to the faith-filled applications.

Mark 12:35-37
Jesus has silenced their questions. Now, he takes the lead in the conversation. After referencing several fathers of the faith like Moses, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, one last big name needs to be brought into the story. It is the highly esteemed King David. All of these men were used by God to help the story get this far. They are not the creators, the center, or end of the story. All submitted their lives to the one and only true God and King. He was standing right in front of them. What would they do now?

Mark 12:38-40
At this point in time, Jesus pulls no punches. The religious leaders have come after him. In case the message of their argumentative defeat is not clear, Jesus plainly calls them out. Beware, do not go in their way or follow their influence. Remember this is being said in the temple which was their domain of leadership. This confrontational moment is not intended to publicly embarrass them. Jesus has been patient up to this point. The stakes of life and death are high for them and those they are leading. The truth must be said. Their response was completely in their control.

Mark 12:41-44
Now for the hero of the day. It is an unsuspecting lady without a title of power, influence, or leadership. She was poor. She was alone. She was in the back. No one knows her name. Yet she gives all, loving the Lord her God with all her heart, soul, mind, strength, and resources. She desperately needed these resources, but her faith was fully surrendered.

Remember the context for how we began this conversation. Mark's audience was walking through the persecution created by the Jewish and Roman authorities. Jesus' disciples and followers were being martyred. These believers needed to be reminded they were not alone.

Stay true. Stay strong. Be fully surrendered just like this poor widow did long ago.

12

LESSON 12

RELIGION OR FAITH
MARK 12

OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

13

LESSON 13

KEEP MOVING FORWARD
MARK 13

OVERVIEW

Jesus is about to step beyond his lifetime into what is ahead for his disciples. They have an assignment to fulfill. The rest of Jesus' week is going to be hard. The sparring words turn to physical violence of the worst kind. In the future this violence becomes the experience of each and every disciple.

The political landscape is critical to understand. We have witnessed the verbal attacks coming from the Jewish religious leaders. Within days, they partner with the Roman political system to carry out the execution of Jesus. In the decades ahead both groups continue their efforts against the Christian movement.

In the future, the disciples and believers fulfill the words of Jesus. They heal like he healed, they teach like he taught, and they suffer like he suffered. While oftentimes this chapter in Mark is cast far into the future, it is more of an immediate message preparing the disciples to keep what Jesus started moving forward. And they do. The proof is the existence of the church and believers populating the earth today.

13

LESSON 13

KEEP MOVING FORWARD
MARK 13

OUTLINE

Mark 13:1-2
Jesus died around AD 33. History tells us that in AD 70 the Romans destroyed the city of Jerusalem, even burning down the temple. The events recorded in the Bible, from cover to cover, happened in the context of real history. Jesus is about to predict the future of the city where he is standing. Next, he will reveal the future implications for those surrounding him.

Mark 13:3-8
Later, the New Testament will specifically confirm some of these experiences. The future famine is mentioned in Acts 11:27-30, while some of the false teachers are addressed in Acts 20:29-30.

Despite how inspiring it might be to realize that Jesus accurately addressed their futures, do not miss the transformation of the disciples' posture. They are leaning in, seeking to receive what Jesus is saying. His warning to be alert—because deception is the greater enemy—must be heard. The events of history can not be controlled. They will be what they will be. However, what we believe and how we live is 100% our choice.

Mark 13:9-13
Some of these experiences will happen in just a matter of weeks. For instance, Peter and John are arrested in Acts 4:1-4. James, one of the four Jesus is having this conversation with, will be martyred. The story is recorded in Acts 12:1-2. Later the Apostle Paul will be in Jerusalem to worship in the temple prior to its destruction. He will be arrested by the Jews and tried by the Romans then get shipped to Rome for an appearance before a higher court. These events are recorded in Acts 21:26 through the end of the book. Multiple times Paul shares the story of the Bible and Jesus through his own life experience as he stands before different legal authorities.

13

LESSON 13

KEEP MOVING FORWARD
MARK 13

OUTLINE

Mark 13:14-23
The abomination of desolation refers to an act or acts that will desolate the temple. We know from history the temple was completely destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans. It has never been rebuilt.

Mark 13:24-34
In the midst of the painful events ahead, Jesus continues to reign as King. None of this happens without his knowledge. The ways of the world stand in stark contrast to the kingdom of God.

Again the message to the disciples is to be alert. You cannot control your day or your tomorrow. However, your faith and obedience are real choices to own. Let all these facts not lead to fear, confusion, distraction, or arguments. Rather, may they set you on high alert. Faith must shine in the darkest of moments. This will be the only help for yourself and others.

13

LESSON 13

KEEP MOVING FORWARD
MARK 13

OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

14

LESSON 14

PUBLIC FAITH
MARK 14

OVERVIEW

This is a weighty and intense chapter. It is filled with many characters, all make public choices as it relates to Jesus. The span of time is two days: Wednesday - Thursday of Easter Week. This is also known as Jesus' Passion Week.

It is important to note each specific character and the public choices they make. You will be shocked at times, inspired, maybe even saddened. Read and re-read to ensure you accurately comprehend what occurred. The pace, the people, and the unfolding events are a lot to grasp in your first reading.

I suggest going slowly to ponder what is happening. Try not to get lost in all the details or discerning the motives. There will be much to explore at a later date. Make a list of what comes to your mind as you read. Then in future Easter Weeks, pull out that list for dedicated study. Your celebration of Easter will become especially meaningful moving forward.

14

LESSON 14

PUBLIC FAITH
MARK 14

OUTLINE

Mark 14:1-2
The chief priests and scribes want Jesus gone. However, their desire for his extermination is outweighed by personal safety. They are not willing to risk their lives for what they believe, rather they are seeking to prioritize personal comfort. As you read Mark 14-15 remember Jesus came to give his life for all humanity including these religious leaders. No one will take his life. He will orchestrate when and how it is given away.

Mark 14:3-9
Two very different people enter the scene. A leper and a woman, both have been ostracized in society. Their reputations are far different from the esteem commonly given to the chief priests and scribes.

Jesus is in a home again with a gathering of his friends, followers, and curious pursuers. I wonder sometimes if he felt more at home in settings like this than the many times he visited the synagogues and temple. When you think of the diversity of settings and interactions he pursued over his three years of public ministry, it spans quite a wide scope. Jesus was a people-person extraordinaire.

Today, this woman is still being remembered. Every time someone speaks about the good news of Jesus she is being honored. Another public choice is being made with eternal consequences.

Mark 14:10-11
Judas enters the fray. It is mind-blowing to contemplate the depth of this move. Do you focus on Judas' choice or Jesus who enlisted him as a disciple? Do not forget what the chief priests and scribes were afraid to do. Jesus makes sure it gets done his way.

Mark 14:12-16
The event of finding what becomes known as the Upper Room is very similar to the disciples finding a donkey for Jesus to ride into the city on Palm Sunday. Again, Jesus is in charge of every aspect of his life. Nothing happens to him. All is being chosen for us.

Mark 14:17-21
Jesus knows everything. Try to imagine the dinner conversation at this point. Judas is displaying his best poker face while Peter is probably interrogating the room. Jesus' knowledge of all we think, do, and feel can naturally put us on the defensive. His preference is we respond much like the leper who invited him into his home. Hiding from our failures solves nothing.

14

LESSON 14

PUBLIC FAITH
MARK 14

OUTLINE

Mark 14:22-26
During Passover a lamb would be sacrificed. It was part of the Old Testament covenant in remembrance of God delivering his people from the bondage of Egyptian slavery. God protected Israel as it escaped and provided freedom. The Passover lamb would be celebrated as a part of the meal.

This is the context in which Jesus institutes what we know as Communion or the Lord's Supper. The Last Supper becomes the first official Communion Service celebrating the Eternal Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. The disciples do not know exactly what all this meant, but we do know that this celebration continues today. In some ways, the reality of the staying power of the Communion Service helps prove the fact of its origination story. I hope this inspires your faith, deepening your next Lord's Supper experience.

Mark 14:27-31
Judas betrays Jesus; the others deny him. Jesus knows everything. All need redemption. No one is exempt. People fail. Jesus saves then sets us on a kingdom mission. Their sins will not keep them from fulfilling a grand purpose in the future. The same goes for us.

Mark 14:32-42
There is much to ponder here. Jesus calls a few disciples away privately. The leaders we have come to know are engaging in a practice we have often read about, getting away to pray. Three times in a row their full bellies get the best of them. We are about to experience a series of repeating three's.

So far Simon the leper and the woman with the jar of perfume are standing out as inspiring faith heroes.

Mark 14:43-52
Jesus is surrounded yet somehow alone. Everyone betrays him at the same moment—not in the same way, but the specifics are merely semantics. All are making public faith choices. In that sense, everyone needs a Savior: me, you, everyone we know, as well as those we do not know from the beginning to the end of time. Remember who orchestrated and predicted this very moment. Be comforted by his loving pursuit. It takes humility and courage to have faith.

14

LESSON 14

PUBLIC FAITH
MARK 14

OUTLINE

Mark 14:53-65
The religious leaders try Jesus first. They must find him guilty of a religious crime violating their law, though they do not have authority to punish him given the Romans are in charge. Jesus would be handed over to the civil authorities in the next chapter.

Ponder the leaders of Israel that sought to condemn God's son, the one sent to save them. Notice that Jesus remains silent for the most part. It is important that their efforts to find him guilty fail. They need Jesus' help to succeed. After his silence he says what he needs to say to accomplish what he needs to accomplish. They think they have finally trapped him, yet we know he is surrendering his life on purpose.

Mark 14:66-72
Here is the second series of threes. Peter denies Jesus in no uncertain terms. He can not wiggle his way out of this one. He not only denies knowing Jesus three times, but it is filled with expletives. The salty fisherman caves under pressure. We know what it feels like to be afraid. All of us make choices we are not proud of when we feel desperate.

This is not the end for Peter. His future is filled with courageous faith. This chapter screams two things: everyone needs a Savior and Jesus willingly desires to be your Savior. No sin is too big. Nothing surprises him. He knows all in advance. Be inspired to open your home just like Simon the leper's hospitality, and bring your humble devotion to him like the woman with the jar of perfume.

14

LESSON 14

PUBLIC FAITH
MARK 14

OUTCOME

What inspired you from the reading?

What challenged or confused you from the reading?

What in the reading reminded you of something you have previously read in the Bible?

Did you find an interesting map or history timeline fact?

What in the reading reminded you of something you have experienced in life?

What lesson will you take from the reading into your current weekday?

Let's think about people we might want to start a conversation with in the future because we think they would enjoy it and find it helpful.

Let's think about how we can live as salt and light in our everyday lives.

CONVERSATION NOTES

15

LESSON 15

KING JESUS
MARK 15

OVERVIEW

While Mark 14 covers two days of Jesus' last week, Mark 15 provides the details for Jesus' final day. It is the Friday of Passover week, commonly known as Good Friday.

It is fast-paced with the convergence of many developments from a variety of groups of people. The Jewish religious establishment partners with the Roman government. The common people get involved. Soldiers, criminals, and innocent bystanders all play a role.

Everyone behaves loudly. Jesus is astonishingly silent. The disciples are missing in action. There are a couple of noticeable conversions along with a small group of women who have been Jesus' supporters all along.

15

LESSON 15

KING JESUS
MARK 15

OUTLINE

Mark 15:1-5
Very early in the morning, the Jewish religious leaders had completed their investigation and found Jesus guilty. Now they needed the Roman government to provide the punishment.

The named accusation: Jesus' claim as King of the Jews. This would be of some concern to the ruling government. Despite Rome being in power they were the minority of the population in this region. They needed to appease the Jewish leaders, squelching any potential uprising.

It is extremely important to recall where our story began: in Mark 1:15, John the Baptist announced the kingdom of God was near with the arrival of King Jesus. The concept of God being King of his people dates back to the founding experiences of Israel in the Old Testament. God declared himself as their King and they were his people. This relationship provided protection, provision, prosperity, and purpose to Israel. Then they abandoned God as King desiring their own physical king. Israel lived under a man as king for a few centuries before it all fell apart. (See 1 Samuel 8 for an introduction to Israel's ongoing struggle with God as their King.)

The restoration of God's kingly rule over his faithful people is a constant work in progress. However, this is his desired relationship with us. If we want his protection, provision, prosperity, and purpose in life, we must submit to him as King.

We have watched Jesus amaze people with his teachings and miracles. Now his silence is astonishing. This chapter appears to be out of control. However, we know that Jesus has orchestrated everything and is now allowing the details to play out publicly.

Mark 15:6-15
Everyone declares their motives by their actions and fear is a big driver. The religious leaders are afraid of Jesus. The people are afraid of the religious leaders. The Roman leadership is afraid of not granting the people what they want. Jesus remains silent.

15

LESSON 15

KING JESUS
MARK 15

OUTLINE

Mark 15:16-20
Roman soldiers are now declaring their stance toward Jesus as they mock him as King. No one is without guilt at this point. The leadership, crowds, soldiers, and absent disciples have publicly expressed their opinions by their actions. Everyone is guilty. All are in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Mark 15:21-32
We learn it is only 9:00 in the morning. All the previous activities happened with haste, much under the cloak of darkness. We do not know if Simon was Jewish or Gentile, nor do we know his faith perspective. At the very least he serves as a symbol of how everyone needs the message of the cross despite our backgrounds or level of understanding.

Mark 15:33-41
Jesus breaks his silence at noon by announcing that he has completed his mission. A few notable people are mentioned. Faith now begins to sprout. You will notice three distinct audiences are publicly identifying with Jesus.

First, the centurion is a Roman soldier. Second, the women who had been following Jesus as a part of the group of disciples are present.

The curtain in the temple separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple. God's presence was behind the curtain and only the High Priest could go behind the curtain. He could only do it once a year to offer a sacrifice for the people's sins. This barrier to accessing God's grace was now gone.

Mark 15:42-47
The third confession comes from a Jewish religious leader in the early evening. He was a part of the group that previously tried and convicted Jesus (see Mark 15:1). Joseph risks his name, reputation, title, and life to align with Jesus. The torn curtain has revealed the path to God. There is still no mention of the disciples.

15

LESSON 15

KING JESUS
MARK 15

OUTCOME

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CONVERSATION NOTES

16

LESSON 16

THE END IS THE BEGINNING
MARK 16

OVERVIEW

As we conclude this book, let's remember a couple of items that provide important context to the brevity of this chapter. First, Mark's gospel is the shortest of the four gospel accounts. Matthew's, Luke's, and John's books are more developed in terms of storytelling. You can often discover a few more details with some explanation in the other three books.

Second, Mark is the very first gospel record, having been written around 65 AD. Mark is writing some thirty years in the future of the events mentioned in Mark 16. This means his audience is well aware of what happened after Jesus' resurrection because they have been interacting with his disciples and followers. They knew many of the stories Mark alludes to in this chapter. Mark's intention in writing this gospel was to record the story of Jesus before all the first generations of followers died. It is his record from actual eye witnesses who were martyred right before their eyes. He does not want the story of Jesus to die out and future generations be denied salvation.

This chapter begins on Sunday, but it never ends as believers continue to pass on the story of Jesus from one generation to the next just like Mark describes.

16

LESSON 16

THE END IS THE BEGINNING
MARK 16

OUTLINE

Mark 16:1-8
Jesus was crucified and placed in the tomb on Friday. The Sabbath, Saturday, was a day of rest. It is Sunday of Easter week. These same women who traveled alongside Jesus and witnessed his worst day are now providing one final gift. However, they receive the surprise of their life. It is so shocking, they run away not knowing how to process what they experienced.

Mark 16:9-11
These verses provide a few more details both on Mary's background prior to her transformation and on how the followers of Jesus received the news of his resurrection. Luke 24:9-11 provides a little more detail. It says that once Peter heard these words from Mary he immediately ran to the tomb to see for himself. He found it empty just like they said and was amazed.

Mark 16:12-13
Mark is referring to a story that is recorded in vivid detail in Luke 24:13-35. Two men walking on the road have a conversation with Jesus about all they had just experienced in Jerusalem. At first they do not understand, then they do.

Mark 16:14
Luke 24:36-48 and John 20:24-29 provide some color commentary to this verse. It includes the story commonly referred to as Jesus' revelation before Doubting Thomas.

Mark 16:15-16
The disciples and early followers are now sent on a mission. They are ambassadors, tellers of the story of Jesus. Their experiences over the past few years were not simply for themselves. They were called from day one to follow, becoming fishers of men. Jesus told them they would experience many things in the future–much like they had just witnessed. They would stand before the authorities, give testimony, and ultimately suffer persecution because of the name of Jesus.

16

LESSON 16

THE END IS THE BEGINNING
MARK 16

OUTLINE

Mark 16:17-18

The early readers of Mark's gospel knew these items very well. They were living witnesses of the miracles recorded in the book of Acts, done through the apostles as the church began and the Gospel message spread across the ancient world.

Mark 16:19-20

Acts 1:1-8 tells this part of the story. It is the last event of Jesus' life on earth. He has one final conversation with them, then departs to the right hand of God in heaven.

This story of Jesus is supernatural in every way. Not only did Jesus give his life for the mission, but so did his early followers. Now for centuries faith lives on through those who believe. First it was passed on by word of mouth. Then by the recorded Bible. History tells us that the Bible has been burned multiple times by political regimes around the world seeking to extinguish Christian belief. Yet, faith cannot be terminated. Do you believe the story Mark has been sharing?

16

LESSON 16

THE END IS THE BEGINNING
MARK 16



OUTCOME

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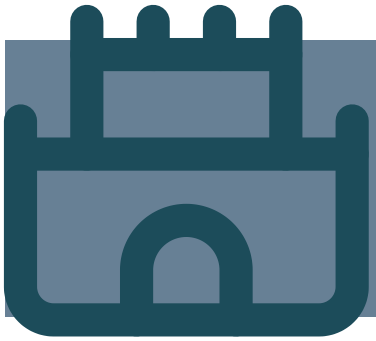
CONVERSATION NOTES



REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS AS YOU CONCLUDE THIS STUDY

What is your one big takeaway from this lesson series?

Do you think you are ready to start a conversation with someone you know and trust that would be interested in this lesson?

Do you want to walk through another lesson?

Do you think you are ready to explore living as salt and light in a way that is in your wheelhouse of passion, experiences, and strengths?

PRAYER REQUESTS

CONVERSATION NOTES



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Todd McMichen brings over four decades of faith-based leadership from local church work to national nonprofits. He holds a B.A. in Religion and Biblical Languages from Palm Beach Atlantic University in West Palm Beach, Florida as well as a Masters in Divinity from Southwestern Seminary in Ft. Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Theresa, live in Birmingham, AL enjoying their kids and grandkids.

START A CONVERSATION TODAY

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