

Ephphatha!

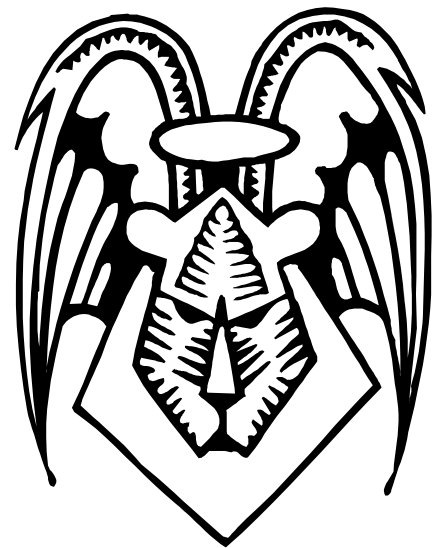


BE OPENED!

A Bible Study for Families who
haven't yet studied the Bible
together as a family

Featuring the Gospel of Mark

Rev. James Gallagher
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THE WINGED LION: MARK

* Ephphatha is a word from the Aramaic Language which Jesus spoke. It means: "Be Opened!" See the Bible story in Mark 7:31-37 for more on this word.

Welcome to the Gospel of Mark

In chapter 7:31-37, Jesus heals a man who is both mute (cannot speak) and deaf (cannot hear). Jesus says, “Ephphatha” which means “Be Opened!” This is a miracle story because Jesus heals a man who suffers because of these physical attributes. This is also a miracle story because Jesus is telling us that we need our ears open to hear and our mouths open to share what we hear. Reading the Bible helps us to open our ears to hear God’s word and to open our mouths that we can share the message about Jesus with others.

This Bible study is designed to open you to the joys of God’s Word. It cannot be assumed when you open the pages of the Bible that you will instantly understand all of the stories, images and concepts. The Bible was written during a very different era from our own: technology, culture, politics, economy, and religion – all were different when the Bible was written.

Through these simple 30-minute Bible studies, you will be introduced to the Gospel of Mark and to some of the biblical concepts found written in the Gospel. This study is designed to be used by the entire family. Together, parents and children can read a chapter of the Gospel, learn what is happening in the story, and share insights with each other.

Martin Luther believed very much in the family being together and reading the Bible. This is partly why he was so very interested in translating the Bible into German. The other reason was the Bible was only published in Latin, the official language of the Church during that era. But the average person couldn’t read Latin, German was the language of the people in the region where Martin Luther lived. After completing the German translation, Martin encouraged other translators, too, to make the Bible accessible in all languages.

In this same light, this Bible study has been developed, to help make the Bible more accessible in our modern context. Parents no longer need to fear reading the Bible with their children. If you, the parent, do not fully understand the Bible, basic help is available here. As you follow these studies, other resources will also be mentioned which can help you study the Bible in more detail and with more understanding.

There are four elements to each study. Some are meant for you to read together. Some involve questions for you to share insights. Each of us can respond to the message found in the Bible. We all hear the word and share how it impacts our life. Parents use this as a time to help your children to see they, too, have an important voice and can hear God’s word and respond to it.

Here are the elements:

Bible Concept: This section is meant to be read aloud. It is designed to help you understand a concept found in the Gospel of Mark which may not be part of our culture today. Each concept will be about either a theme or concept related to the whole Gospel or to the specific chapter for that study.

Memory Verse: Each chapter will have a verse for you to remember. You are encouraged to highlight, underline, circle or otherwise mark this verse in your Bible. Yes, it is okay to write in your Bible. Marking these verses will help you find them when you want to remember them later.

For each Memory Verse two translations are given, the New Living Translation (NLT) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The NRSV is the translation we hear read during worship and it is written at about a 12th grade reading level. The NLT is written at an 8th grade reading level.

There are many different translations of the Bible, including the King James Version, the New International Version, and Good News Bible, also called Today’s English Version. The reason there are so many translations is because the Bible was originally written in Greek and Hebrew. The ancient languages are not the same as today’s modern Greek and Hebrew. Some words used do not always translate directly into English. Some are concepts. For instance, there are three Greek words found in the New Testament that are translated ‘love’, though each is slightly nuanced from the other (see chapter 12).

Having different translations as you read can help you because different translators use different words and the nuances of the meanings become clearer when you read the same passage with different translations.

Definition: There are lots of words or phrases we use because they are in the Bible, but that doesn't mean we automatically understand what they mean. In this short section, a word or a concept will be defined which will help you to understand one of the stories you read in that chapter.

Focus Story: While the intent is for you to read the whole chapter each week, one story will be highlighted for study. Questions may be short-answer based on what you have read, they may be open-ended and give you a chance to express what you hear God saying to you. Do not be afraid to share your opinion.

Praying Together: This is the conclusion for each session. Use this time to pray together as a family. There is a written prayer for you to say together, there are things for you to consider and discuss and to lift to God in prayer, and then the Lord's Prayer is an appropriate way to conclude each session.

While it may be assumed that you should know the Lord's Prayer, it cannot be assumed that everyone can say the Lord's Prayer by memory. Each study includes the Lord's Prayer printed in the session so everyone can pray together. Both the traditional (Our Father who art in heaven) and the modern (Our Father in heaven) translations of the Lord's Prayer alternate between the studies. It is good to know both, since many churches will use both at various times during the year.

Reading the Bible is meant to be a wonderful journey of discovery. Hopefully through this study, it will also become a little less scary as the concepts, stories and words open up with fuller meaning through your time studying God's word.

God's peace as you read,

Pastor Jamie Gallagher

Chapter	Bible Concept	Memory Verse	Definition	Focus Story
1	Not Just Any Book	1:1	Gospel	1:9-11, The Baptism of Jesus
2	Miracles	2:17	Blasphemy	2:23-28, Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath
3	The Synagogue	3:35	Beelzebul	3:13-19, Jesus Chooses His Disciples
4	Parables	4:41	Kingdom of God	4:1-20, The Parable of Sower
5	The Author of Mark's Gospel	5:36	Gerasenes and Decapolis	5:1-20, Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Man
6	Jesus and John the Baptist	6:37	Denarii	6:6b-13, Jesus Sends His Disciples
7	Who's Who in Ancient Judaism	7:28	Use a Dictionary	7:31-37, Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man
8	Ancient Middle East Geography	8:29	Sign from Heaven	8:31-38, Jesus Shocks His Disciples
9	Demon Possession	9:35	Transfiguration	9:14-29, Jesus Heals a Boy
10	The City of Jerusalem	10:14	Son of David	10:17-31, Jesus and the Rich Man
11	Holy Week	11:9-10	Hosanna	11:12-14 and 20-25, Jesus and the Fig Tree
12	Quoting the Old Testament	12:17	Cornerstone	12:28-34, The Greatest Commandment
13	Apocalyptic Literature	13:31	Mount of Olives	13:1-37, Jesus Foretells the End Times
14	The Sanhedrin	14:26	Abba	14:12-26, The Last Supper
15	Crucifixion	15:34	Temple Curtain	15:21-32, The Death of Jesus
16	How Does Mark's Gospel End?	16:8	Jesus' Tomb	16:1-8, Jesus Is Alive

Chapter 1

Bible Concept: Not Just Any Book

The Bible is the Living Word of God. It is entirely inspired by the Holy Spirit and also written and translated by men and women. It contains history, poetry, faith-filled stories, incredible concepts and miracles. It speaks truths about our God and is completely relevant to our lives.

Yet, to think about opening its pages can be a scary thought because the Bible is filled with images and language we do not always understand. This is why when we read the Bible, we need to study it. We study so the stories begin to make sense. We study so we get a fuller idea of what God is trying to say to us.

The central theme of the Bible is God's love for us. We find God's love from the first pages of creation in Genesis, through God's loving relationship with the people of Israel, through the Gospel stories of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and finally through the New Testament Letters which help us to understand how to live as Christians. The Gospel of Mark is one of four accounts of Jesus' life. While all four Gospels differ in the way they tell us about Jesus, three are fairly similar in the way they tell the story. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called Synoptic Gospels, because they tell the story roughly the same. Synoptic is a Greek word meaning, "one view."

That all four Gospels tell us the story differently does not take away from the power of the truth, rather it adds to our understanding of a God who loves us so very deeply that he sent his only Son that we could have eternal life through God's forgiveness. As you study the Bible an important question to ask yourself is this: How does this story help me to better understand God's love for me?

Memory Verse

Chapter 1, Verse 1 reads:

Here begins the Good News about Jesus Christ the Messiah, the Son of God.

New Living Translation (NLT)

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

What do you expect this book to tell you?

Definition

The word Gospel means "Good News." Gospel is an old English word.

Good News is something we cannot help but share. It is something which makes a great impact in our life. In particular, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is something which brings freedom for us as it tells us that we have been forgiven by God because Jesus died for all!

Focus Story: The Baptism of Jesus, 1:2-11

How is John described?

Why is John baptizing people?

Only one line records what anyone says at Jesus' baptism. Who speaks?

What does this voice say?

Why do you think God would say, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, that he is "fully pleased" (NLT) with Jesus?

Baptism identifies us with God and with God's mission in this world. Why do you think it is important that Jesus is baptized?

Talk with your parents about your baptism. Ask if they remember what was said by the pastor. Ask about what day it was, who was with you, what kind of party they had for you. If there are any pictures from that day, ask your parents to bring them out to look at.

Is there anything you do special in your life because you are baptized, that if you were not baptized, you would not do?

God spoke at your Baptism too, and God said, "You are my beloved Child, and I am fully pleased with you." How do you feel knowing God is fully pleased with you?

*praying
together*



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Sit around your kitchen table or in your living room. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray.

Pray together:

O Gracious God, we give you thanks for you have claimed us in Baptism as your precious children. Teach us always to live as you wish. Remind us each day that we have your forgiveness to share. Amen

Share with your family one thing you are thankful for today. Give thanks to God for each member of the family, and for the many things you are thankful for.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 2

Bible Concept: Miracles

The Bible is filled with miraculous stories. Some are very difficult to understand or even to believe. A miracle is something that happens which has no logical reason and which science cannot prove why it happened. The central character in any miracle is God, for God is not limited to human reason and logic. God can make extraordinary things happen in the lives of ordinary people.

To believe that something is a miracle, we only need to believe that God is at work. The result of a miracle is always something that defies logic. Finding your keys after praying about it — sorry, not a miracle. While the prayer may have calmed you from hysteria of not being able to find your keys, your prayer did not make your keys suddenly appear in a place they were not before. You would have found them anyway. Having an unexplained healing to an illness for which doctors have no cure, now that is a miracle, because God is at work removing the illness from your body.

In a miracle, God is revealed as loving, forgiving and ever-restoring to wholeness in the midst of what is broken. The person who experiences a miracle always sees this loving, forgiving and restoring God more clearly than before. This is why faith in God is the center for any person experiencing a miracle.

While we may not see miracles in today's world quite the same way as how we read about miracles in the Bible, miracles are still present and still happening in our midst. When you look for miracles around you, look for people who are being drawn closer to God through forgiveness, through sacraments of Baptism and Communion (yes, sacraments are miracles), through reading God's Word, and most powerfully, through prayer.

Memory
Verses

Chapter 2, Verse 17 reads:

When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough."

New Living Translation (NLT)

When Jesus heard this, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous, but the sinner."

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

Who do you expect Jesus to be interacting with the most as you read this story?

Definition

Jesus is accused of blasphemy. Blasphemy is a concept which involves speaking evil against God, or speaking in God's place, or treating something very sacred in an unholy way.

The people who didn't like Jesus didn't like the way Jesus acted as though he were God. They couldn't believe that God could become one of us, and they especially didn't think someone like Jesus could be God.

Focus Story: Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, 2:23-28

What is the third commandment, according to the Small Catechism? (See Exodus 20:8 for help)

The Hebrew word 'Sabbath' can be translated as either 'seventh day' or 'day of rest.' The Sabbath Day is sacred because of what God did on the 7th day of creation. What did God do? (see Genesis 2:1-2:4 for help)

What types of things do you consider taboo, that is something you can't do, if you are going to enjoy a day of rest?

It might seem silly to us today that picking grain would be a violation of this commandment, for getting food is so natural and even on a day of rest, we need to eat. Yet, the people in Jesus' day considered the Sabbath Day so sacred and special that even picking grain was taboo on the Sabbath Day. For Christians, Sunday, the first day of the week, is the Sabbath Day. Why? (See Mark 16:1 and following verses, especially verse 6, for help)

Jesus uses this story to tell us that, more important than following special rules of rest, is to do activities that honor God. Read verse 28 again, what activities do we do on our day of rest that honor Jesus, who has said he is even the master of the Sabbath Day?

If your Sundays are usually filled with sports or business trips, what other day do you do particular activities that worship God and celebrate faith in Jesus Christ?



*praying
together*



Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remind you of the presence of God as you pray. Hold hands and stand in a circle together.

Pray together: O powerful Lord, thank you for giving us a day that we can rest and praise you. Help us to be refreshed in our faith this day. And help us in all we do, that we may do everything to honor you. Amen

Talk about friends or family who are sick or hurting. Ask God to help heal them, lift them up to God as the friends of the paralyzed man lifted him to Jesus.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 3

Bible Concept: The Synagogue

When we study the Bible, we learn how religion was practiced by the ancient faithful Jewish people. The center of Jewish religion was the Temple in Jerusalem. At the Temple, priests made sacrifices, received offerings, celebrated festivals and proclaimed God's law for all the Jews who made pilgrimages to worship at the Temple.

In the Gospels a new place for Jewish people to gather and worship is introduced. The synagogue, which is not mentioned in the Old Testament, was a center for Jewish worship and study. Synagogue is a Greek word which means 'gathering place.' Some synagogues during Jesus' time had buildings, some were just any place the Jewish people gathered, like the town square.

When they gathered at the synagogue, town politics would be discussed, family issues dealt with, and celebrations shared. In fact, much about the early synagogue shaped the early Christian church and is still present today in our modern church. Preaching was a central element to worship at the synagogue. The scriptures would be read from scrolls and the rabbi would sit while he taught the people what the scriptures meant and how they applied to their daily living. Meanwhile, the Temple in Jerusalem remained important as the only place where sacrifices and other religious rituals were performed.

If there is a synagogue in your community, it would be appropriate to speak with the rabbi, the spiritual leader of a synagogue, as a pastor is the spiritual leader of a church. You can visit as a family or ask your confirmation teacher if your class can visit together. Use your visit to explore the many similarities between Christian and Jewish beliefs and worship traditions.

Chapter 3, Verse 35 reads:

Anyone who does God's will is my brother
and sister and mother.

New Living Translation (NLT)

Whoever does the will of God is my brother
and sister and mother.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

What do you expect Jesus to be teaching,
so that we can know if we are part of his
family?

Definition

Jesus is accused of casting demons out in the name of Beelzebub. Beelzebub is a word which can be translated as 'prince of demons' or 'lord of the flies'.

Beelzebub is another name for Satan, who is believed to be the leader of all the evil demons. More will be said about Satan and demons later in this study.

Memory
Verse

Focus Story: Jesus chooses his disciples, 3:13-19

The word disciple means “student” or “learner”. The word apostle means “to be sent”. In many ways these 12 men were both sent by Jesus and students of Jesus.

Who are the 12 men chosen by Jesus to be disciples?

What is the mission he sent them on?

What do we do that shows we are students of Jesus?

What do we do that shows we are sent on a mission from Jesus?

As part of this week’s exercise, you should contact a member of your church council (who is not a member of your family) and ask this person these questions:

How do you understand yourself as a disciple and an apostle of Jesus?

What are ways members of your congregation can become better disciples of Jesus?

What mission has Jesus given to our congregation?

Record the answers on a separate piece of paper and keep with your Bible studies.

(if you have a hard time contacting a council person, ask your pastor to help you.)

*praying
together*



Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. Pray with your arms stretched up toward heaven, reach as high as you can.

Pray together: O sending God, you have given us each a mission to do in this world. Help us to better understand your message, so we can be better prepared to share it with our friends, neighbors and family. Amen

Talk about a fight you recently had with someone. How did it make you feel to be in that fight? What are ways we can pray for forgiveness tonight? Ask God to give his forgiveness to you and the person you fought with. Remember to tell this person you are sorry when you next see him/her.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 4

Bible Concept: Parables

A parable is a story used to teach a lesson. Jesus uses parables to tell us about God and the Kingdom of Heaven. Sometimes the meaning of the story is very obvious. Sometimes the meaning of the story is hidden in the story, and we have to think about what it means.

Jesus tells parables using images and concepts familiar to the people of his day. So when Jesus tells the people the Kingdom of Heaven is like a mustard seed, he knows the people know what a mustard seed is. As we learn to read the Bible, sometimes we are not as familiar with the images that Jesus uses. Study notes in the margin or at the bottom of some Bibles will help us to understand the images Jesus uses. Also, if you have a Bible dictionary, that can help, too. For instance, if you are not familiar with how a mustard seed works, look it up in a Bible dictionary. There you can read the explanation that it is a very tiny seed that grows into a large plant. The article might even include a picture of one.

Part of the fun of reading Jesus' parables today is that we learn what life was like when he lived and taught. Since many of the people he lived with were people who depended on agriculture and fishing as their primary means of support, most of Jesus' parables reflect those themes. Most importantly parables are meant to make us think.

Modern day parables include fairy tales because they teach important moral lessons. Some television shows are parables in the way they use fiction and drama to convey their lessons. In sermons, pastors even use stories from their own life and from experiences of the congregation because often using a story everyone can understand is the best way to tell about God and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Chapter 4, Verse 41 reads:

And they were filled with awe and said among themselves, "Who is this man, that even the wind and the waves obey him?"

New Living Translation (NLT)

And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

Modern weather predictors have a hard time getting the weather correct. Jesus has the power to change the weather just by speaking. Why do you think the Gospel writer wants us to know that?

Definition

The expressions "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" are used frequently in the Gospels. These expressions are interchangeable and mean the same thing.

They tell of a place where God completely rules and where God's Will is done absolutely. Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God is near, and teaches any who will listen how to recognize and

Memory
Verses

Focus Story: The Parable of the Sower, 4:1-20

What seeds did you plant in your garden this last summer?

If yes, how did your garden do? Did anything fail? Did anything do better than you expected? How often did you have to weed?

If no, talk with someone who did plant a garden. Ask this person these questions about their garden. How do they feel when something they planted succeeded or failed?

In Jesus' parable, there are 4 types of soil and later Jesus explains these types of soil. What are the soil types and Jesus' explanation for each?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Who is the farmer?

Why does God scatter the seed of faith on all types of soil?

Talk about a time when you were really excited about God and being a part of the church.
Talk about a time when you were really not excited about God or being a part of the church.

How do you see God working in your life when you are excited and when you are not excited about being part of the church?

*praying
together*



Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. Start a prayer journal tonight and write in the names of those for whom you pray. Each time you pray, write in your journal what you are praying for.

Pray together:

O gardener of our hearts, help us to have good soil that our faith may grow with deep roots. Send us to share our faith with others, that their hearts may be open to your word.
Amen

Talk about people you know who are really excited about their faith. Ask God to keep blessing them with faith. Talk about people you know who are really not interested in the church at all, ask God to scatter seeds of faith in their hearts.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 5

Bible Concept: The Author of Mark's Gospel

The Bible is a collection of 66 individual books written over the course of many centuries. Many men and women were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the books of the Bible. The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were written during the first 50-70 years after Jesus died and rose from the dead.

The Gospel of Mark is believed to be the earliest written Gospel. It dates to around 65 AD, or about 30 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. We say the author is Mark, though we do not know for certain since the author did not put his name into the text. A man known as John Mark was a friend of the evangelist Paul, author of many New Testament letters. Many scholars believe this John Mark is the author of Mark's Gospel. We do not know if John Mark ever knew Jesus in person. He most likely used stories from people who did know Jesus to write his Gospel.

The Gospels are not considered to be of the genre of biography or history. The literary genre of the Gospels is very unique in that it uses historical information and biographical information but is designed to capture our hearts in faith toward God and his Son, Jesus Christ. We read the Gospels to learn about Jesus' life and we accept by faith, not by historical accuracy, the events of Jesus' life.

Watching documentaries on television help us to understand how historical sources and archaeology do or don't make the case for the historical accuracy of the Bible. But our faith in Jesus Christ does not depend on history, it solely rests on the truth that Jesus has died and is risen and now we are forgiven.

Chapter 5 Verse 36 reads:

But Jesus ignored their comments and said,
"Don't be afraid. Just trust me."
New Living Translation (NLT)

But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to
the leader of the synagogue, "Do not fear,
only believe."
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

When we face a difficult situation, it may be hard to trust Jesus. He is not physically standing beside us. We only have our faith to help us trust Jesus. What can help us to learn to trust Jesus more during difficult times?

Definition

The Land of the Gerasenes, or country of Gerasenes, was a place located on the southeast corner of the Sea of Galilee. It was part of the Decapolis, or Ten Towns, which was a political alliance of ten towns. This was outside of the area Jesus would normally travel in. The people who lived in the Decapolis were not religiously or ethnically Jewish.

Memory

Verses

Focus Story: Jesus heals a demon-possessed man, 5:1-20

Is there a person known in your community as someone to avoid? Describe the reasons you are told to avoid this person.

Is there someone who always seems to avoid you? Why do you think this person always avoids you?

The man in today's focus story is possessed by a great multitude of demons. How else is he described?

Would you avoid him? Why does Jesus approach him?

After the pigs drown in the lake, what do the herdsmen do?

What is the reaction of the townspeople?

Sometimes the power of Jesus can be very frightening, we do not understand what is happening and we are scared. What about the powers of Jesus frightens you?

The man who was healed wanted to travel with Jesus, but Jesus had a different task for him. What did Jesus ask him to do?

Who might Jesus be calling you to tell about your faith?

*praying
together*



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember God is in your midst as you pray. Be sure there are no distractions while you pray. Agree not to answer the phone. Turn off the TV and radio.

Pray together: O Shepherd Jesus, thank you for making a difference in our life and giving us the gift of forgiveness. Guide us as we share our faith with someone who needs to experience your love, too. Amen

Talk about a news story that causes people to be frightened. Ask God to comfort those who daily experience fear because of war, terror or hunger. Who do you turn to when you are frightened? Ask God to be present with you when you are frightened.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 6

Bible Concept: Jesus and John the Baptist

When Jesus walked this earth, people were often confused about who he was. The Gospels weren't written yet to tell them about who he was and what he would do for them on a cross. They knew Jesus claimed to be God's Son, but besides Jesus, there were a lot of prophets claiming to be God's son, each with their own understanding of how to get on God's good side and get into heaven.

There were also a lot of prophecies in the Old Testament regarding who the Savior might be and how we would know the Savior had come. Elijah was a well-known prophet who was taken into heaven by God on a chariot of fire. You can read about Elijah in 1st and 2nd Kings. Many Jewish people believed Elijah had to return from heaven on a chariot of fire to proclaim that God's redeemer was coming to save Israel. The Roman governor Herod believed Jesus was John the Baptist, whom Herod beheaded at the request of his daughter. But John the Baptist and Jesus were two different people. They were actually born a few months apart and it is believed that their mothers were related (see Luke Chapter 2). Early Christians believed John the Baptist fulfilled the role of Elijah by preparing the way for Jesus (refer back to Mark chapter 1, verses 2-8).

Our faith teaches that we are to believe Jesus is God's Son, that is, God's Word as a human being. As God's Word, Jesus was with God at creation, and remains with God for eternity, and by the death and resurrection of Jesus, God has opened the way for us to everlasting life. With God the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus completes the Trinity, which is the mysterious way in which we experience our God, who as the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit has created us, saves us, and daily renews us as the forgiven children of God. The Gospel of Mark is very clear that only Jesus is God's Son, not John the Baptist or any other prophet, and only Jesus fully embodies in human flesh the mystery of the Trinity.

Definition

Chapter 6 Verse 37 reads:

But Jesus said, "You feed them." "With what?" they asked. "It would take a small fortune to buy food for all this crowd."

New Living Translation (NLT)

But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?"

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

How does Jesus provide you with enough that you can share with those who don't have enough?

Denarii is a plural word for Denarius, a Roman silver coin worth about a day's wages for a laborer.

If you want to know what this equals in today's money, take minimum wage, roughly \$5.50 an hour, multiply that by 8 hours to get \$44 and then think about that multiplied by 200 to get \$8800. Can you imagine needing that much money to feed all the people who were present on the day Jesus fed more than 5000 people with just 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish?

Memory
Verses

Focus Story: Jesus sends his disciples, 6:6b-13

(the b means the second part of the verse, it starts the new section)

What errands do you do (or remember doing) for your parents?

How does it make you feel when your parents trusted you with this errand?

What does Jesus send his 12 disciples to do?

What were they to take with them as they went?

What was the result of their mission?

Did you notice that Jesus sent his 12 out in pairs, not alone, but with someone to help them. Who is someone you are close to that you go to church with and talk about your faith with and do church activities with?

Faith partners are important. A faith partner can be someone from the church you attend, or someone who attends a different church. A faith partner should be someone who shares your faith in Christ and is someone you are comfortable talking to about your faith, and acknowledging when you have sinned, and when you have prayed, and when you have received from God good gifts and so forth. If you haven't found a faith partner yet, is there someone you could talk to and say, "Jesus wants us to go on this faith journey with someone else. Will you be my partner in faith?"

*praying
together*



Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. As you ask God to bless your items tonight, place your hands on each item. Touch is an important element of prayer.

Pray together:

O Heavenly Provider, you have blessed us with so much stuff, help us to share from our plenty that everyone may have something. Amen

What is a local agency that takes donations of old clothes, toys or even canned/boxed foods? Take an inventory of your house, are there old clothes, toys or even food in the pantry which you could share today? Gather them together, ask God to bless them as you share.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Chapter 7

Bible Concept: Who's Who in Ancient Judaism

One of the more difficult tasks of reading the Bible is keeping track of all the groups Jesus encounters. In chapter 7, the first story talks about Pharisees. Other groups mentioned in the Gospel include the Sadducees, the scribes, priests, rabbis and the Sanhedrin (san, like sand with no 'd', he, like the pronoun, drin, like drink without the 'k').

Here are brief descriptions of each of these groups:

Pharisees: This group of men was particularly interested in following God's law very exactly. They observed ritual purity laws and refused to associate with anyone who did not keep God's law as they did.

Priests: Priests served in God's temple performing the religious sacrifices and any of the rituals that the Law of God told them to do. They were seen as mediators between the regular people and God.

Sadducees: Little is known about this group within Judaism at the time of Jesus. It is known that they did not believe in life after death or angels or spirits. They are often lumped with the Pharisees as opponents to Jesus' message.

Scribes: Another common word used to talk about those who opposed Jesus. Scribes were those who could read and write. They were not so much a separate group with a political agenda or certain religious beliefs, they were simply a class of people who were highly educated.

Rabbis: This word has been translated "Teacher." A rabbi would have students and be very centered on teaching the law. Rabbis were also leaders of the synagogues.

Sanhedrin: This was a group of the leaders. Differing sources debate over who exactly was in the Sanhedrin. Most likely the Chief priest, leading elders, Pharisees, and other important people in Jerusalem made up the Sanhedrin. In the Gospels, it is clear this is the group that judged Jesus and handed him over to be crucified.

Chapter 7 Verse 28 reads:

She replied, "That's true, Lord, but even the dogs under the table are given some crumbs from the children's plates."

New Living Translation (NLT)

But she answered him, "Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

This woman was very bold. She was not going to leave Jesus without Jesus helping her. She argues with him, and tells Jesus why he must help her. What does this teach us about prayer?

Definition

Having a dictionary with you when you read the Bible can be a helpful tool. Verses 21-22 have many words that could be looked up. Fornication, avarice, licentiousness, slander, folly, are just a few examples from the NRSV.

The Bible gives us moral guidance, but if we don't understand the concepts it is telling us to stay away from, how can we? Look these words up in your regular English dictionary and talk about why we are to avoid these

Memory

Verse

Focus Story: Jesus heals deaf and mute man, 7:31-37

Has anyone tried to tell you something but no matter how they said it, you just didn't understand?

How does it make you feel when you can't understand a friend or a parent?

In those days modern science did not exist, so Jesus uses a rather strange technique to heal this man. Jesus heals the man by doing what?

What kind of faith do you think it takes for someone to come to Jesus to be healed?

Jesus says in Aramaic, "Ephphatha" (pronounced ef-fa-tha) which means "Be Opened!" What kind of faith does Jesus have that he can say "Be Opened!" and it is?

Jesus asks the crowds not to tell anyone, yet they cannot keep silent, they have to tell what Jesus has done. Why do you think it is important that the crowds tell what Jesus have done?

In a story shortly after this, the disciples cannot see that what Jesus is doing shows them that he is God's son. Also, they are unable to hear the message from Jesus which plainly tells them who he is.

How does reading the Bible help you to open your eyes and ears to see the work and hear the words of Jesus in your life?

*praying
together*



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. Kneeling is a traditional prayer position, try kneeling tonight as a family.

Pray together:

O merciful healer, touch us with your hands, that we may be cured of whatever makes us sick. May our eyes be opened to your love and our ears open to hear your sweet message of grace. Amen

People do amazing things in our community which help others. Who is someone you know who reaches out to heal the sick, to comfort the elderly, or simply makes a difference in other people's lives? Ask God to bless this person in his/her work.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 8

Bible Concept: Ancient Middle East Geography

Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Israel, these are a few of the more commonly known places talked about in the Bible. Dalmanutha, Bethsaida, Galilee, Caesaria Philippi, these are some other places talked about in chapter 8 of Mark's Gospel. The geography and political terrain of the Middle East looked quite different when Jesus walked this earth. Some of these places, like Jerusalem and Bethlehem, can still be found on modern maps today. Some places, like Galilee and Caesaria Philippi may still exist, but with different names.

A great tool to have with you as you read your Bible is a map which shows where all these places are. Some Bibles have a section of maps, either at the front, back or in the middle. Bible atlases are available for a good price at local Christian bookstores and sometimes at any store that sells books. These atlases tell us about the geography and the politics that were all very important at the time.

Jesus travels a lot. As you read the Bible, trace a line of Jesus' journeys on your map and see where all he went. This helps you understand the movements that are taking place during the Gospel. Some Bible atlases also have descriptions of the culture, foods, economy and politics that were happening at the time Jesus lived. Following Jesus' travels by using an atlas will help you to further experience the world that Jesus experienced.

Learning about modern day geography and politics of the Middle East is just as important. The Middle East is often in the news as a place of terrorism, conflict and animosity between peoples. Becoming familiar with the people, culture and politics helps us to understand why we pray for these people and for peace in a place which is so filled with hatred and war.

Chapter 8 Verse 29 reads:

Then Jesus said, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter replied, "You are the Messiah."
New Living Translation (NLT)

He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

Remember the first verse of the Gospel of Mark? "Here begins the Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God." Peter confesses in this verse that he understands that Jesus is the Messiah. Having read 8 chapters of this Gospel, who do you believe Jesus to be?

Definition

Jesus is asked to give a sign from heaven to prove who he is.

A sign from heaven is something that is miraculous, beyond explanation. The Pharisees who ask Jesus for the sign do not believe that his works have been genuine miracles. They want something even more spectacular.

By refusing to give them the sign, Jesus is saying it takes faith to see God is present through his deeds, and if you don't have faith you can't see the signs which are already present all around you.

Memory Verse

Focus Story: Jesus shocks his disciples, 8:31-38

Talk about a time when a friend said something so shocking to you, that your only response was "Friend, you're scaring me!"

What is the most shocking thing you have heard lately?

To be Messiah, what must Jesus do?

Peter, who just confessed that he believed Jesus to be the Messiah, tries to tell Jesus how to be Messiah. Why do you think it is hard for Peter to understand that Jesus must die?

Joke: How do you make God laugh? Answer: Tell him your plan.

God's plan for Jesus may not be easy to understand, yet it is the way it had to be. In verse 33, Jesus tells us that we only see things from a human point of view, not from God's point of view. Jesus knows he will die, but he also knows what will happen after he dies. Because we know the rest of the story, what will happen after he dies?

If we understand that our life on earth will end, and that Jesus has given us a new life in heaven, a new life called resurrection, how then are we to live our life now?

It is difficult to give up the things that we like and enjoy in this life, but what are some things in your life that God would like to see you give up, so that you can follow Jesus and lead a godly life?

*praying
together*



Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. Hold hands as you pray together tonight. Remember safe touches, like holding hands and giving hugs, are important.

Pray together:

O Crucified and Risen One, you teach us what it means to give everything up for another. Help us to give up something in our life, that we can walk closer with you and grow in faith. Amen.

Showing our gratitude for what God has given is an important task in our prayer life. Not only are we to give something up, we are to be thankful for what we have been given. Talk about the many blessings in your life and give thanks to God for them.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 9

Bible Concept: Demon Possession

Demon possession is common in the Gospel. We regularly read stories of Jesus casting out demons. Yet in our day, we do not talk about demon possession. Faith healers who publicly travel around casting out demons are not common and if someone does claim to cast out demons, skeptics tell us why we should not believe these claims.

In the ancient world, many cultures believed there were spirits present throughout nature. These spirits could be good or evil. Around 300-400 years before Jesus was born, this concept of spirits grew to an understanding that there were many evil demons, with a leader named Satan.

In the Old Testament, the understanding of who Satan was gradually changed. In Genesis chapter 3, the serpent is sometimes associated with Satan. The serpent's role is as a tempter for Eve and Adam. In the book of Job, Satan is part of God's heavenly court, and is understood as a spiritual adversary. As adversary, Satan took everything away from Job — family, wealth and health in an attempt to get Job to curse God. When it didn't work, God restored everything to Job.

In the 200—300 years before Jesus lived, the concept of evil demons grew into an understanding that they were said to possess people and cause physical or mental diseases. By the time Jesus was healing people, most illnesses were attributed to a demon of some sort. In our modern world we understand medical science differently and no longer believe demons possess a person who is blind, has a mental disorder, or has cancer. Yet, we do continue to talk about how Jesus heals us; however, instead of asking for Jesus to cast out a demon, we ask Jesus to heal our cancer, our addiction, our broken bodies, and by faith we receive God's comfort, peace and healing Spirit.

Chapter 9 Verse 35 reads:

He sat down and called the twelve disciples over to him. Then he said, "Anyone who wants to be the first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else."

New Living Translation (NLT)

He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

What are ways that your church encourages you to be a servant in this world?

Are there ways you can help your church encourage others to be a servant in this world?

Definition

Jesus is transfigured in chapter 9. To be transfigured means to have your figure changed into something completely other, yet at the same time remain completely recognizable.

The disciples knew at all times this was Jesus, even though he was appearing in his heavenly glory, and no longer as just a human. And God's voice clearly tells us that it is not the Law or the Prophets, but only Jesus who can restore us with God.

Memory
Verses

Focus Story: Jesus heals a boy, 9:14-29

Have you ever been told, "You can't do that." What are things you cannot do because you are not old enough and/or because you haven't learned how yet?

How does it make you feel when you cannot do something?

Have you ever tried something new, even though you didn't know if you could do it? What happened?

How do you suppose the disciples felt when they were not able to heal this boy (remember a lot of people were watching them as they tried but failed)?

Throughout this Gospel, a central message is that Jesus heals people. What does this message mean to you?

The disciples cannot cure this boy because they are not relying on faith but on their own powers. And the father is upset because his belief is not strong enough. What does the father of the boy ask Jesus to do? (see verse 24)

Whenever we do not have the faith to get us through, we can ask Jesus to help us in our doubt. Doubt is a natural human experience, Jesus knows this, and Jesus can help us when we do not believe.

What is an experience you have had recently that caused you to doubt Jesus' presence in your life?

How might this passage teach you to be open to Jesus even when our faith is weak?

*praying
together*



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. Return to your journal. Have you been keeping track of your prayers? Write in your prayers tonight.

Pray together:

O Lord, you season us with the gift of faith. In times when we doubt, stay ever closer to us that we may learn to hear your voice and to trust your guidance. Amen

Evangelism (telling others about our faith in Jesus) begins with prayer. Who is a family member or a neighbor who needs to hear about God's Good News in Jesus? Name these people and ask God to help open their hearts to his word.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 10

Bible Concept: The City of Jerusalem

The city of Jerusalem has great importance in the Gospel of Mark and in the Jewish faith. It is where Jesus is going and where he knows he will be killed. And because Jesus talks openly about his death at Jerusalem, his disciples discourage him from going there. The disciples knew that many prophets were killed in Jerusalem when they spoke against the Jewish political leaders and prophesied according to God's Word and not according to the king's favor.

Jerusalem first gained importance for the Jewish people when David, about 1000 years before Jesus lived, captured the city and made it the new capital of the united Jewish Kingdom. A huge temple was built by Solomon, David's son, and this temple housed the ark of the covenant which had been kept in a tent since the tribes of Israel were at Mt Sinai and received God's law. This first temple was destroyed by the invading Babylonians about 500-600 years before Jesus was born. After the Jewish people returned to their city from a forced exile, they rebuilt the temple. This second temple, which had been restored and remodeled, was the temple Jesus knew and would go to for the Jewish festivals. It was, however, destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, or about 35 years after Jesus' death and resurrection.

The city of Jerusalem has been a center for Jewish religion and politics for many centuries now. The Temple was seen as the place for the sacrificial rituals and practices of their religion. And many believe that God will not return to the world until the Temple is restored. Today, though the Temple remains destroyed, portions still stand including what is called the "Wailing Wall", a prominent location for Jews to pray. Jerusalem remains a critical holy city for Jews, Christians and Moslems.

Chapter 10 Verse 14 reads:

But when Jesus saw what was happening [the children being turned away], he was displeased with his disciples. He said to them, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

New Living Translation (NLT)

But when Jesus saw this [the children being turned away], he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs."

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

What are ways in which your church today reflects welcoming children and giving value to what children offer?

Definition

"Son of David" is a title given to Jesus. It is a recognition that he is God's chosen king, who will be like David. Jesus' genealogy, found in Luke and Matthew, takes great care to say David is an ancestor of Jesus. David was the great king who united Israel and made Jerusalem its capital. The prophets said that a king would come from David's line to restore Israel and Jerusalem to its favor with God.

Memory
Verse

Focus Story: Jesus and the Rich Man, 10:17-31

If you were given a chance to have a face-to-face meeting with Jesus, what question would you ask him?

The Rich Man asks Jesus what question?

After Jesus learns the man keeps the law, what does Jesus tell him to do?

What is the man's reaction?

Are you surprised by the man's reaction?

Wealth may seem contrary to the Kingdom of God in this story, but really this story isn't about wealth. This story is about relying on God, not on our own ability to do the law, and it is about giving over to God what really belongs to God. What really belongs to God?

If we cannot give our whole selves over to God, it is very difficult to get eternal life. The disciples realize this and believe this means no one can be saved. But what does Jesus say to them (verse 27)?

By God's grace we have been saved. By God's grace we can give of ourselves and experience an eternal life we already have. How do you feel knowing it is only God's grace which has saved you, not your living by the law?

*praying
together*



Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. Create a box for prayer notes. Place a stack of note cards and a pen next to the box. Whenever you go by the box write a prayer and place it in the box. Each time your family prays together, open the box and pray for what is written on the note cards.

Pray together: Jesus, thank you for welcoming the outcast, the lowly, and the children. Help us to share your compassion and to welcome others into our church and into our home. Amen

Who are the people of our society who are outcast? Are there classmates or work-associates of you and your family who are teased, or ignored by others? Ask God to help you become a friend to these people.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 11

Bible Concept: Holy Week

Holy Week is the name we give to the week which includes the special worship services called: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. It is the last week of the season of Lent. This week is so sacred to Christians because of Jesus' death and resurrection, which are ultimately God's acts of grace which save us. Because Jesus was obedient to God, even to death, the sins of all humanity have been forgiven for all of time.

In Mark chapter 11, we begin to hear about the week of events which lead to Jesus' death and resurrection. Notice you do not find the names, "Palm Sunday", "Maundy Thursday", "Good Friday", or even "Easter" in the Gospel text. Over the centuries of Christian worship, these days have taken on their special names and this week is considered the holiest week of the entire year for Christians.

Holy Week centers on the events of Jesus' death and resurrection. The reason Jesus and his disciples came to Jerusalem was to celebrate a very holy festival called Passover. When the Jewish people celebrate Passover, they remember how God set them free from slavery in Egypt through a series of plagues. Specifically Passover refers to the final plague in Egypt when God's angel of death passed over the houses of the Israelites because lamb's blood was put on their door frames. You can read more about Passover in Exodus.

Jesus is called the Lamb of God, whose blood sets us free from sin. When we celebrate communion, we receive the body and blood of Jesus in the bread and wine or juice. This reminds us that Jesus died that we may be free from sin. God doesn't set us free because of our human actions. God sets us free because of what Jesus did. This is why Holy Week is so very important. Jesus died so we may be forgiven.

Chapter 11 Verses 9-10 read:

He [Jesus] was in the center of the procession, and the crowds all around him were shouting, "Praise God! Bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Bless the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Praise God in highest heaven!"

New Living Translation (NLT)

Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven."

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

How do you expect people to treat Jesus based on them praising him in this story?

Definition

The Hebrew word Hosanna, which is shouted by the crowds as Jesus enters Jerusalem, literally means, "Save us, we pray."

Hosanna and the rest of this quote in the memory verse is from Psalm 118 and it was read often during the liturgy on the days during the festival of Tabernacles, which is the Jewish festival which includes Passover.

Memory Verse

Focus Story: Jesus and the fig tree, 11:12-14 and 11:20-25

What is your favorite food item?

How do you feel when the grocery store is completely out of this favorite food?

All Jesus wanted was a fig, he was hungry, but this tree had no figs on it. What do you think about Jesus' reaction to the tree?

Jesus used this story for two purposes, one to stress the importance of faith and second to talk about forgiveness.

What is the lesson Jesus teaches us about faith? (see verses 20-25 for help)

Do you have a daily prayer time set aside for your talking with God?

One idea for helping your prayer life is to have a journal in which you write what you pray about, and then you can go back and mark when you have received the answer to your prayers.

What is the lesson Jesus teaches us about forgiveness? (see verses 20-25 for help)

Have you ever been so mad at someone you said unkind words, maybe even swore at them? When we are really mad at someone and we treat them unfairly, our relationship is damaged, like the fig tree that withered. But Jesus wants us to have good relationships. How does prayer help us to forgive others?

*praying
together*



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember God is present in your midst as you pray. Stretch your hands upward toward heaven as you pray. Reach as high as you can.

Pray together:

Fully Divine and Fully Human Lord, you teach forgiveness and love, even as you approached your own death. Help us to know that forgiveness and love in our own life and help us to tell others about your love and forgiveness. Amen

Talk about something that was good about your week. How do you see God in the midst of the good? Talk also about something that was bad about your week. How do you see God in the midst of the bad? Thank God for the good times, and ask for God's help for the bad times.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 12

Bible Concept: Quoting the Old Testament

One literary device the author of the Gospel of Mark and other New Testament authors use to prove Jesus is God's Son is to quote what we call the Old Testament. They simply called it the Scriptures. At the time the New Testament was written the scriptures we call "Old Testament" were the only scriptures.

The Old Testament tells the story of Israel and its relationship with God. It is filled with such things as history, law, poetry, and prophecy. The New Testament authors want their readers (you and me and everyone else who has read the New Testament) to believe that the Old Testament has told us plainly about Jesus and his coming to save the world from sin.

There is a classic example found in Mark 12:10-11 which quotes Psalm 118:22-23 about how Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders and yet now he is the chief cornerstone. Psalm 118 was also quoted in chapter 11 during the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Mark 11:9-10 quotes Psalm 118:25-26, which praises God for coming to save us.

Some Bibles will tell you in a footnote or a side-margin note if something is quoted from the Old Testament. As you read the Gospel of Mark and other New Testament books, it is important to look up those Old Testament passages and read the stories involved with them. It will help you understand what is happening in the New Testament story where you found the quote.

Chapter 12 Verses 17 reads:

"Well then", Jesus said, "give to Caesar what belongs to him. But everything that belongs to God must be given to God."

This reply completely amazed them.

New Living Translation (NLT)

Jesus said to them, "Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were utterly amazed at him.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

What in your life belongs to this world?
And, what in your life belongs to God?

Definition

What is a cornerstone? In building, there are many stones which go into making a wall. The foundation needs to be the strongest, and so the best stones are part of the foundation. The cornerstone is part of the foundation — it serves as a foundation for the foundation. It is the strongest stone of the foundation and often times is used to etch the year the building was built. To say Jesus is our cornerstone is to say Jesus is the one on whom our faith is built.

Memory

Verses

Focus Story: The Greatest Commandment, 12:28-34

Who is someone you love very much?

What are ways you show this person how much you love him/her?

The “teacher of religious law” (NLT) asks Jesus what question?

And what is the greatest commandment?

What is the second which is equally important?

In the Greek New Testament, there are three primary words which have been translated into the English word ‘love’. Agape means Christian love, a deep God-like love. Philia is a kind of familial love, and specifically means brotherly love (think Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love). And eros is sexual love which in a Christian understanding is the sexual intimacy between husband and wife. We get the word ‘erotic’ from this last word for love.

Which love do you think Jesus is talking about in this passage?

What are ways we show God our love in return for how God has loved us?

What are ways we show our neighbors that we love them?

*praying
together*



Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember God is present in your midst as you pray. Laying down is another traditional prayer position. You may lay on your stomach or your back. Think about which each position means as you lay before God and pray together

Pray together: Blessed Savior, you stretched out your arms and taught God's love by dying for our sins. Help us to open our hands to our neighbors so that we can love as we have been loved. Amen

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

What is something that you have always wanted? This is something you have dreamed about, desired greatly, and just got to have. Ask God, is this something God wants you to have? And how might having this help you serve God better in this world?

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 13

Bible Concept: Apocalyptic Literature

In Mark Chapter 13 we find apocalyptic literature. This form of literature is very difficult to understand because it uses a lot of symbolic language, myth-like concepts and satire on current events. If we read apocalyptic literature at face value, that is we take what it says as though that is exactly what will happen, we could become very scared by what Jesus is saying. In fact, some recent fiction books use a face value interpretation to create a series that intends to scare the readers into believing in Jesus Christ because the alternative of being left behind on earth outside of God's salvation is too scary. Unfortunately a face value interpretation does not tell the whole story. As we study the images and warnings contained in apocalyptic literature, we begin to discover a great deal of hope in our God who loves us.

Here are two examples from this chapter. In verses 3-8, Jesus tells about the 'birth pangs' (NRSV). Wars and famines and so forth will be signs of the end times. A face value interpretation might easily make one think that what we currently experience is a sign. Yet, wars have been going on for a long time and will continue; likewise, famine is something which has been with us forever. In verses 14-23, Jesus tells about the destruction of the temple. He calls it the 'desolating sacrilege' (NRSV) which is anytime a pagan religion destroys the temple, or worse, worships an image of the pagan god in the temple. The Romans destroyed the Temple in 70 AD, about the same time the Gospel of Mark was written.

So a fuller interpretation of apocalyptic literature leads us to see what God is doing in the midst of the world around us. And what God is doing in the midst of the world around us is giving us hope in Christ that salvation is won, even in the face of horrible atrocities that we feel powerless to change. We are to be ready, as Jesus himself warns us, for the new age of heaven is dawning right before our eyes. But we are to be ready not because of fear, but because of the hope we have in Christ.

Chapter 13 Verse 31 reads:

"Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will remain forever."
New Living Translation (NLT)

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."
New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

What is the power of this promise when you think about everything that is a part of your life, and that Jesus says it will all pass away, but his words will not?

Definition

The Mount of Olives is an important location right outside of Jerusalem. Olives were a primary crop of the area and on this mount was a great olive press which was used to make olive oil used particularly in lamps.

Jesus went to this mount after the Last Supper and sat in the Garden of Gethsemane, which means "Garden of the Oil Press", while he prayed.

Memory
Verses

Focus Story: Jesus foretells the End Times

What scares you about the end times?

Many people thought the changing of the century would be the end of the world. What do you remember from the New Year celebration of 1999/2000?

Chapter 13 is an entire section of Jesus' predictions. When this was written, the people living in Jerusalem were very scared. Trouble continued between the Roman Empire and the Hebrew leaders. It was in 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, hoping to quiet a nation long plagued by religious uprising and war.

The author of Mark knew people were scared and needed reassurance. What is some of the language of this chapter that gives hope?

What do you think we are to do to keep ourselves alert and awake as we wait for Jesus' return?

Was there something in your life, that if you knew it was going to happen, you would have prepared differently for?

How do you think Jesus wants us to prepare for his return?

*praying
together*



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. Talk about when the best time has been for you to read the Bible and pray together. How might you continue without a specific book resource?

Pray together: Holy Comforter, in days of great confusion we need you more than ever. We cannot know the day of your return, but we can know you are coming to bring us into your kingdom. Help us to be ready, and help our faith be strong in you. Amen

Who is a family member that needs prayers this week? Is this person dealing with a bad work situation, or a health problem? What are ways we can let this person know we are praying for him or her?

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 14

Bible Concept: The Sanhedrin

In chapter 14 the Sanhedrin takes center stage as the trial of Jesus begins after his arrest. The Sanhedrin was the Jewish High Council (see the brief description in the Bible Concept of chapter 7). Some ancient sources said the High Council was made up of 70 elders, lead by the High Priest.

Before the Roman Empire took over, the High Priest was chosen from among the priests who served the Temple. All priests were from the tribe of Levi and claimed Aaron, Moses' brother, as their ancestor. The High Priest had the special position of mediating the sin offering which was required by the Law of Moses to restore the whole nation of Israel to God's favor. The High Priest and the High Council kept the traditions and rituals and made sure God's Law was proclaimed and followed.

In the time of the Roman Empire, the High Council also acted as a go-between of the Israeli people and the Roman governors. The High Priest, Sanhedrin and Roman governors played political power games with riots and military force and money. To make sure the people of Israel didn't forget who was in charge, the Roman governor held the power to select a High Priest, and this person wasn't necessarily from the tribe of Levi. It was whoever the Roman governor liked.

This was a chaotic and corrupt system which was far from what God intended for his chosen people. Jesus represented a change in the way things were, his teachings made the people think the status quo was bad (which it was). His teachings helped people realize the political corruption of the system. Therefore, the High Council, who wanted to keep things as they always had been, decided they had to get rid of Jesus. And their only way to do so was to give Jesus to the Romans, call him an enemy of Caesar and have him executed.

Chapter 14 Verses 36 reads:

“Abba, Father,” Jesus said, “everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine.”

New Living Translation (NLT)

He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.”

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

Why is it important that we know that Jesus felt this much agony and fear before his crucifixion?

Definition

Abba is an Aramaic word which means Daddy. It is the informal way to address a Father. Jesus uses the word Abba, Daddy, in this setting to reflect his close relationship with God, his Father.

Jesus also used the word Abba when he taught us to pray, “Our Daddy in heaven . . .” It might seem strange, but this is the relationship we have with God — we can call him Daddy.

Memory
Verse

Focus Story: The Last Supper, 14:12-26

What types of food do we typically have when we celebrate?

What is the reason Jesus is having a special meal with his disciples?

Look up in your family Bible dictionary the Passover celebration, and read about the foods that people ate during one of these celebrations. (If your Bible dictionary doesn't talk about the foods, ask your pastor or local rabbi.)

How does Jesus tell his disciples they will know where to prepare the meal?

What stunning revelation does he reveal to the disciples as they ate dinner? (see verse 18)

We repeat this story whenever we celebrate communion in church. The language in Mark varies slightly from the language we use in church but this is the same story. When you come forward to receive communion, what do you think about?

What do you feel as you receive a piece of bread and a sip of wine/juice and know that in that moment Jesus is absolutely present and loving you?

Jesus uses language of covenant when he talks about his blood being "poured out for many" (NRSV). A covenant is a strong pact which once sealed cannot be broken. What is the covenant Jesus is sealing with us that can never be broken?

Why do you think Jesus needed to die that the covenant of forgiveness could never be broken?

*praying
together*



Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember God is present in your midst as you pray. Folding our hands and looking down is a traditional prayer stance, try folding your hands but looking up at heaven.

Pray together:

Passionate Christ, we look to your suffering and we are ashamed that our sins were part of why you had to die. But you teach us to be thankful that a loving God would not abandon us, but give us a way to know life everlasting. Thank you. Amen

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

Talk about a person who has been an inspiration to your faith. This could be someone you know in church, in your family, or someone famous whose life touches yours. Ask God to bless this person.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 15

Bible Concept: Crucifixion

In ancient days when the Roman Empire wanted people to know that it was bad to be a rebel, they would kill the rebel in a gruesome way and leave his dead body on display for all to see and to learn that it was not good to be a rebel. Jesus was seen as a rebel because he threatened the Jewish High Council with a different way of believing in God. And Jesus was seen as a rebel against the Roman Empire because he claimed he was God's Son and the only one to be worshipped was God, not the Emperor.

So they crucified Jesus with other rebels in a place where all the people coming into Jerusalem would see and learn it was not good to be a rebel. Crucifixion is a form of torture. The nails in the hands or feet usually didn't kill the rebel. The blood would clot before too much would be lost, so that didn't kill the rebel. Heat, extreme physical stress, suffocation, and perhaps even a blood clot inside the brain or lung, this combination resulted in a slow (sometimes several days) agonizing death.

It might be easy to blame the Jews for Jesus' death, as some do—even in the Bible. It might be easy to blame the Romans for his death. Some pastors even blame sinful people today for why Jesus died. The point of Jesus' death is not who is at fault. The point is God's love conquers even the barriers of sin and death. God sent Jesus knowing he would die even though during his life Jesus did many good things, such as healing the sick, preaching about God's love, feeding the hungry and more. And yet, despite a cruel death, Jesus does not remain dead. Jesus is resurrected on Easter Sunday. By dying, Jesus defeats the powers of sin and death, and by rising, Jesus gives us hope. This is the full meaning of Jesus' death: because he died and now lives forever with God, we too, shall live forever with God.

Chapter 15 Verse 34 reads:

Then at that time Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

New Living Translation (NLT)

At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

This is the first line from Psalm 22. We are meant to hear the whole Psalm. Read Psalm 22 now and talk about what it says in its entirety.

Memory
Verse

Definition

The curtain of the temple was torn in two when Jesus died. This was not just any ordinary window curtain you might find in your house. This was a magnificent curtain which hung in the Temple in front of the Holiest place in the Temple so the evilness of this world would be separated from the pure holiness of God. This curtain was huge, and was one piece, not separate pieces sewn together. The symbolism of this curtain being torn in two is God is no longer contained in holy places, but found in all the earth.

Focus Story: The death of Jesus, 15:21-40

The death of Jesus was not neat, it was messy and it was bloody. Jesus was tortured so much Mark tells us another man was called upon to carry Jesus' cross. Who was that man?

Crucifixion is a way for empires to get rid of opponents and rebels. What was the charge on the sign over Jesus' head?

Do you think they really believed Jesus was a king?

Often when we read the Gospel the people we expect to get it - don't; and, those who we think shouldn't understand, do. Who confesses that Jesus really is the Son of God after he dies?

What prompted him to make this confession?

Not everyone on the Jewish Council agreed that Jesus needed to be put to death. Who was the council member who took Jesus' body and saw that he was properly buried?

Who saw where Jesus was laid?

Having read the complete passion story of Jesus, from his entry to Jerusalem through his burial, how do you feel about Jesus, knowing what he has done for you?

How do you feel about yourself, knowing Jesus has died for all your sins?

*praying
together*



Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember that God is present in your midst as you pray. Use a photo album when you pray for others, it is helpful if you cannot pray in person with someone, that you can at least be looking at a picture. Sure God knows who we pray for, but having pictures helps us remember who we are praying for.

Pray together: Guardian of our lives, you took our sins that we may receive your gifts. Help the power of your death to make a difference in the way we live our lives. Let us live only to glorify you. Amen

Talk about a person in your family or a close friend who has died. What types of feelings do you remember having when you went to the funeral/burial? What kind of feelings do you have now when you think of this person? Thank God for the gift of everlasting life.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.

Chapter 16

Bible Concept: How does Mark's Gospel End?

When you open your Bible to Mark chapter 16, you will notice there is a shorter ending and a longer ending. Some Bibles might even have other ways of expressing the different ways the Gospel might have ended. Scholars have different opinions for why some ancient manuscripts end Mark at verse 8, and why others have a longer or shorter ending beyond verse 8.

Some scholars believe that the Gospel really ended at verse 8 and that a different person added the rest later because he or she was uncomfortable not knowing what happened after the women found the empty tomb. Some scholars believe that Mark really wrote one of the two alternative endings. Yet others believe that the original ending Mark wrote was lost and that another author wrote a new ending trying to remember what Mark had written.

Whatever the truth is, we will never know. Despite not knowing how the author intended the Gospel to end, the impact of the resurrection is definitely the most important and central act of this chapter. What is truly amazing is that this story, regardless of how it continues, focuses on women. In Jesus' day women were not considered worthy of being a witness. They could not testify at a court trial. Yet God chooses them to carry forth the message that Jesus is alive.

Even after his resurrection, Jesus continues to turn upside down long-held beliefs and presumptions and traditions, all for the sake of God's love and forgiveness.

Chapter 16 Verse 8 reads:

The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, saying nothing to anyone because they were too frightened to talk.

New Living Translation (NLT)

So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Reflect on that statement for a moment.

How do you think you would have reacted if you were the first to discover Jesus was risen from the dead?

Definition

The tomb of Jesus was not like graves of today. Today we bury our dead in the ground, they are placed in a coffin which is sealed in a concrete vault and placed in the ground approximately 6 feet deep. Jesus' tomb was typical of his day, it was carved into the side of a hill. It was big enough to walk into and several people could have been buried in the same tomb. The bodies were laid on a bed like shelf, specially prepared with oils and spices, and wrapped in cloth strips. A large stone covered the doorway. Several men would be needed to move this

Memory

Verse

Focus Story: Jesus is alive, 16:1-8

What is your first memory of Easter?

When did the women discover the empty tomb?

Who told them that Jesus was risen?

Whom are the women to tell and what are they to tell them?

The impact of the resurrection is still powerful today. Each day we awake we know we have been fully forgiven and given God's Spirit to live this day for God.

Talk as a family about how Easter has impacted your life.

What are ways you share forgiveness with one another?

What are ways you help other people, as God sent his Son into the world to teach us to help other people?

Is there anything in your life that you are so very afraid of, that you think cannot be overcome?

How does the resurrection of Jesus teach us that with God's help we can overcome anything?

*praying
together*



Praying together as a family is a special time. Light a candle to remember God is present in your midst as you pray. You have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection. Make the sign of the cross on each other's foreheads and say: "You are a child of God. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Pray together: Light of our tomorrow, grant us the faith to believe in your resurrection, even though we cannot physically see you. Bless our family that we may be faithful in loving one another. Amen

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen

What is the most important thing you learned this year by reading through the Gospel of Mark, one chapter at a time. Ask God to always help you to read his Word and to study the Bible.

Conclude your time by saying the Lord's Prayer.