

A St. John's Bible Study

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Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

Welcome to the book of Mark! Mark is a striking, dynamic account of Jesus' ministry; from the appearance of John the Baptist, all the way to the empty tomb. In sixteen short chapters, Mark paints a vivid picture of Jesus, but it is more than a mere biography. As Mark himself tells us in 1:1, his story is a "gospel," a declaration of good news. News that the kingdom of God is at hand (1:15); that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins (2:10); that Jesus himself has bound the strong man, Satan, and is plundering his house; that Jesus is in fact the Christ (8:30), God's anointed servant, who will deliver his people.

Mark tells us his story so that we might repent and believe in this Jesus, the one who came "not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (10:45). May God bless you and bring you closer to Jesus as you dive into the incredible book of Mark.

Who Was Mark?

The author of the book doesn't name himself anywhere, focusing instead on the message. The early Church attributed the book to John Mark, who served with the apostle Peter quite closely (e.g. 1 Peter 5:13). By this account, Peter, as an apostle, passed the stories of Jesus on to John Mark, who then carefully arranged them into the book we have today. Surveying the evidence across the New Testament, there are decent reasons to think that this is true, which makes Mark's story an eyewitness account, and probably the first of the four gospels.

Who Was Mark Writing To?

The gospel of Mark was likely written to Roman Christians who were enduring persecution under the reign of Nero. Details from the book, like the explanation of purity laws in 7:3-4 for example, alert us to the fact that Mark was not initially addressed to a Jewish audience, but to a Gentile one. There are also Latin words and turns of phrase, which, at the very least, locate Mark's audience within Italy (e.g. the unclean "Legion" in 5:9). In 1 Peter 5:13 we get a reference to Peter and John Mark being in "Babylon," which was usually a cryptic way of talking about Rome. If John Mark did in fact write this gospel in Peter's company, then it likely happened during Roman persecution, perhaps in Rome itself. This would also make good sense of details in the text that seem to refer to persecution. In 1:13, for example, Jesus is "with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him." The comment about wild animals is not included in any of the other gospels, and might strike us as a bit odd. One explanation is that this aspect of Jesus' wilderness temptation was emphasized in order to encourage Roman Christians, because death by wild animal in the Roman circus was in fact a typical way for the emperor to both entertain the masses, and to eliminate undesirables.

Mark's Style

Anyone who reads Mark for the first time is instantly struck by how unusual the book is. It is a biography like no other biography. Everything happens "immediately" or "again." Miracle piles up on miracle, with hardly any time to rest. Critics sometimes accuse Mark of being unrefined or clumsy, but the episodes of Jesus' life which he presents are carefully arranged, and all hang together as a single story (So for example, it can hardly be a coincidence that we see Jesus lovingly shepherding the crowd (6:34), by feeding them both soul and body, immediately after an account of the corrupt shepherd King Herod). In all likelihood, Mark was intended to be read aloud without interruption, as the most incredible fireside story ever written. Repetitions and links between episodes, extraneous details like a random pillow (4:38), vivid emotional responses, smatterings of Aramaic; all draw the listener in, so that "he who has ears" might hear the gospel and be compelled to respond.

The performative, oral nature of Mark also comes out in what are elegantly referred to as "sandwiches," where a story begins, is interrupted, and then continues. What is so masterful about these interruptions, is not only that they heighten the dramatic tension, but that they serve as interpretive keys for the story which they interrupt. So, for example in 3:21 a story begins where Jesus' family declare that Jesus is out of his mind. The story is interrupted in 3:22, and doesn't resume until 3:31. In between we get an episode with the scribes, who accuse Jesus of being in league with the devil. Jesus' response to them gets at the heart of the entire issue, and then explains the radical statement he makes about family when the first story resumes. Look out for sandwiches.

IMPORTANT THEMES

The Kingdom of God

Jesus begins his ministry by proclaiming "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand!" We often understand 'kingdom' as a static concept, located in a particular place. When Jesus speaks about the kingdom, he is talking about God's dynamic rule, which breaks in wherever the gospel is preached and takes root (4:30-32). The kingdom of God is the reality out of which Jesus operates, and into which he invites his followers.

Jesus' Identity

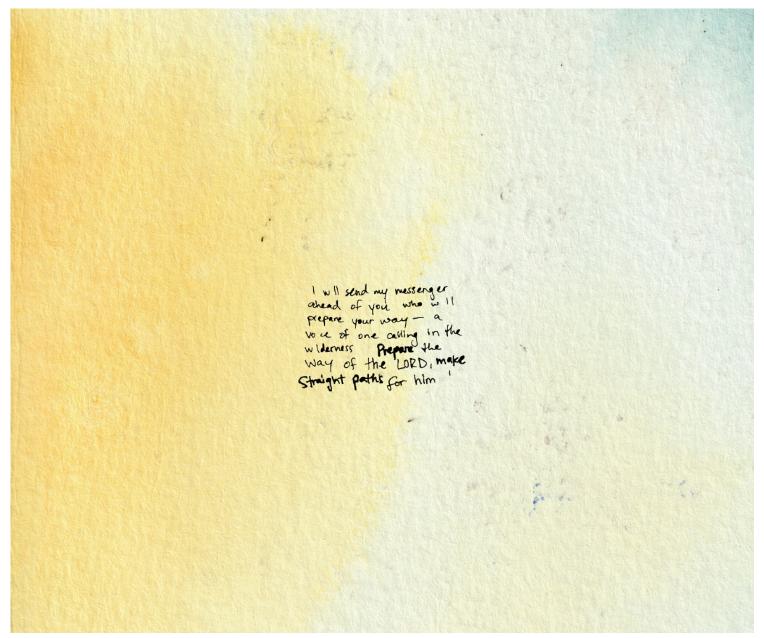
Mark tells us in the very first verse that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; we as readers are given the secret. Those in the story however, struggle to figure out who Jesus is, and are even intentionally prevented from spreading the good news (1:43-44). Yet even when people are told, or see miraculous things which point towards his identity, they still struggle to understand, some even outright rejecting him. What does it mean to say that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God? The story of Mark takes us deep into this question.

The Nature of Discipleship

At the start of Jesus' ministry he calls all to repent, yet chooses some to be with him, promising that he will make them to become "fishers of men" (1:17). But the life of discipleship is not straightforward. The disciples walk with Jesus, witness his ministry, are given "the secret of the kingdom of God" (4:11), and receive "authority over unclean spirits" (6:7). Yet at the very same time, they regularly struggle to understand, because their "hearts are hardened" (6:52). Even Peter, with his monumental confession that Jesus is the Christ (8:30), immediately opposes Jesus when Jesus explains more fully what the Christ must do. Though they are loved, their faith grows slowly, as they grow in knowing and following their Lord.

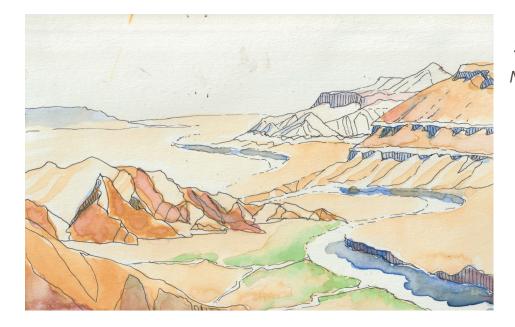
Study #1





Mark 1:1-15

This study kicks off the gospel of Mark, and what a start! In fifteen short verses, we get a prophecy, a prophetic fulfillment, a baptism, a testing, and the beginning of Jesus' ministry as the beloved Son. It is the "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ," who comes to announce that "the kingdom of God is at hand." Compelling, powerful, wasting no time at all (for the time is now), we dive into the remarkable reality that in Jesus, God's plans for the world are fulfilled.



Study #1
Mark 1:1-15

The Beginning

1.1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2 As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, 3 the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,"

John the Baptizer

<code>4John</code> appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. 6 Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Jesus the Baptized

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased." 12 The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. 13 And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.

Jesus Begins Ministry

MNow after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



A Pray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include
characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

	A few questions to consider
•	How does the "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" begin? What happens before Jesus' ministry begins?
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	How does the "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" begin? What happens before Jesus' ministry begins?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- What Scriptures is John fulfilling? Who is he supposed to be? (see Study Notes if you need help with this)
- What was the purpose and meaning of John's baptism?
- Why is Jesus' baptism so important?

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D Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

- What do we learn about Jesus right at the start of Mark's gospel?
- What does "the gospel" mean here?
- What does preparation for God's kingdom look like?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- Are you baptized? Why is this important?
- The kingdom of God has come near in Jesus Christ. What does this mean for you?
- Repentance is a lifelong posture of humility before God. What practices of repentance do you have in your life?
- Jesus is the beloved Son. What could that mean for your relationship with the Father?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.

Study #2



1:2-3 "As it is written..."

Mark is actually quoting two prophets at once, which was not an uncommon practice during Jesus' time. The first reference in v.2 is from Malachi 3:1, where Elijah returns to prepare God's people for the awesome Day of the LORD. The second reference in v.3 is from Isaiah 40:3, where a messenger exhorts the people to prepare themselves for the revelation of the glory of the LORD. The use of both prophetic witnesses makes a strong comment on the appearance of Jesus.

1:4 "baptizing in the wilderness..."

Mark connects Isaiah's "voice in the wilderness" with John's ministry in the wilderness. He is the one preparing the way for the LORD, through a ministry of baptism and preaching. John is described in v.6 as a man who was clothed in camel's hair and a leather belt. This is intended to remind us of the prophet Elijah (2 Kings 1:8), who is also the messenger in Malachi 3:1. Jesus himself will make this connection explicit in Mark 9:9-13.

1:8 "he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit..."

This is something promised by God in Isaiah, both in 32:15 (a chapter about a coming king who will rule in righteousness) and Isaiah 44:3, where the prophet receives an oracle from God concerning a redeemer who is also the LORD of Hosts.

1:9 "Jesus... was baptized by John in the Jordan..."

This verse is reminiscent of Israel passing through the waters of the Jordan river before entering the Promised Land back in Joshua 3. Where Israel originally failed, by persistently rebelling against the LORD, Christ will succeed, by living a life of perfect obedience. Jesus' story also contains another echo of Israel's story: in the wilderness of Sinai Moses dwelt on the mountain for forty days before beginning the next phase of his ministry, and Israel was tempted (and failed) when wandering in the wilderness for forty years.

1:10 "the Spirit descending upon him..."

John has already mentioned that Jesus' baptism will be superior, and here we see the first evidence of that. This is a clear sign that the very power of God will be at work in Jesus' ministry, and that any rejection of him his a rejection of God (cf. Mark 3:20-30 in Study #5)

1:11 "You are my beloved Son..."

There are probably three allusions present in this pronouncement from God: Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 42:1, and Genesis 22:2. The connection with the first two is fairly clear, demonstrating Jesus' unique and favoured status before the Father. The third reference is not immediately obvious in English, but is clearer in Greek. This reference of Genesis 22 means that Jesus' ministry as the sacrificial son is being sealed. For the sake of the world, God will not spare his only son.

1:15 "the kingdom of heaven is at hand..."

This phrase indicates dynamic nearness; God's reign is breaking into the world in a unique and final way. God is physically close in the person of Jesus, and he is also temporally close: history is reaching its fulfillment.



Mark 1:16-39

As we continue to look at the early ministry of Christ in Mark we transition from Jesus' own calling to how he calls his own disciples. These rather large and diverse passages provide us a fantastic picture into Jesus' own ministry priorities, the authority with which he carries them out, and the importance of preaching The Word. Mark's gospel is sometimes attributed as primarily being about the work of Christ. While helpful this can understate the immense importance of what happens in Chapter 1. Jesus makes it abundantly clear that from the very beginning the Word is the work and he is here to preach, not just information but transformation and salvation. So as Christ's proclamation of the kingdom of heaven 1:14 breaking into our world reverberates through these passages the work of the gospel and discipleship hit full throttle in our chapter of Mark.



Study #2
Mark 1:16-39

Fishers of Men

16 Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

Satan Dethroned

21 And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. 22 And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. 23 And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, 24 "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." 25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" 26 And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. 27 And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." 28 And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

The Healing Miracles

29 And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. 30 Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. 31 And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. 32 That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. 33 And the whole city was gathered together at the door. 34 And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

Jesus' Prayers and Priorities

35 And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. 36 And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, 37 and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." 38 And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." 39 And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



A	Pray
B	Read Closely
	This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.
9	A few questions to consider
•	What are some ways Mark pulls the reader into the narrative? What kind of responses do the crowds have to Jesus' preaching and miracles? Who in this passage correctly identifies who Jesus is? How is this contrasted with the crowd around them? How does Jesus go about performing miracles in this passage? What 'techniques' does he use?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- Often in the gospel of Mark when Jesus' authority is challenged there is a sandwich-like pattern in the text. How do verses 21-28 show this sandwich pattern? How does this pattern help to establish Jesus' authority?
- In the last passage, Jesus declared that the "Kingdom of God is at hand". What actions has Jesus taken within this passage to emphasize that message further?

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• Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B A few questions to consider

- Immediately after declaring the kingdom is at hand, and that people should repent and believe in the gospel, Christ calls his first disciples in Peter, Andrew, James, and John. What does this tell us about how Jesus' kingdom work will advance? What does it say about the cost of becoming/being a follower?
- What is the special significance of Jesus' casting out unclean spirits?
- Re-read Mark 2:38. What does this sentence say about Jesus' mission and strategy?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- The ideas of "fishing" and "following" Christ and his authority are tied together in this passage. What does this mean for us as disciples of christ? Can you follow but not fish or fish but not follow?
- Jesus begins his assault upon the gods of this world by his uniquely authoritative preaching of the word. Are there people in your life who need to hear Jesus' teaching? How might this example of Christ's authority help you speak to them?
- While the idea will get expanded upon as the Gospel continues the concept of the cost of being a disciple is present even at the very beginning. In what ways can you prepare your heart for the challenge of discipleship Jesus calls you to?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.

STUDY NOTES

A note on the writing of Mark.

There are many interesting facts about the Gospel of Mark and its unique place among the 4 books that detail the life of Jesus. Primarily amongst them are its claim as the first Gospel to be written, and its extremely clever use of language and structure. There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that Mark is the earliest complete Gospel written for the people of God, and while some stylistic adaptations from existing genres were sometimes used, Mark as an author is setting out on a completely new genre defining adventure. With this in mind we should remember the purposeful nature of both what is written and how it is written. Mark is very intentional with the composition and arrangement of this account of Christ's life and ministry. He doesn't do this to hide details or make things more confusing, but to emphasize narrative, historical, and theological elements of importance.

A note on miracles in Mark.

There is a great deal that could be written, discussed, and learned on the topic of miracles in the Gospels. The big question of why such events occur so commonly in the text and not in our lives is perhaps the most frequently asked on the subject. The short answer is to understand the monumental nature of Christ and the kingdom of God breaking through the regular bounds of life into this world. There has never been a time of such widespread overt spiritual activity as this. Jesus' incarnation breaks all rules, the miracles he performs are done by his power and word to exemplify his divinity and completely unique authority; and further the entrance of God's perfect heavenly kingdom into our world. And while it may seem somewhat unimpressive to only read about such events, the bible is very clear that the greatest miracle ever is Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension offered to us freely.

1:17 "... I will make you become fishers of men."

Aside from the wordplay here about the disciples' already existing occupation of being fishers of fish there is an Old Testament tradition of God both being a fisher of men/people and sending forth others to fish for him. (Jer 16:16, Ez 29:4, 38:4) To be a fisher of men is to call them to repentance to avoid God's judgment.

1:23 a man with an unclean spirit.

There is some debate as to what the particulars of this "unclean" means in this circumstance. Strongest arguments can be made that it either means that the spirit drives the man to commit unclean acts in a jewish legal sense or that the spirit itself is so contrary to the nature of God it does not belong in His sight let alone one of His synagogues. With the second interpretation a wider point can also then be made at the state of religion currently in Jesus' age, that evil, gross spirits so far from God are inhabiting the people of God as they go to worship in His own house.

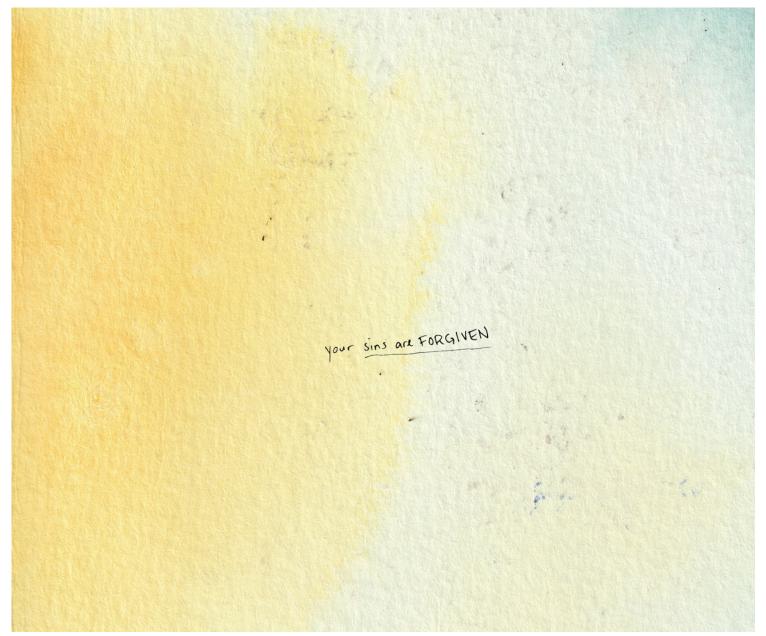
1:23 a man with an unclean spirit.

The concept of demons and possession have become increasingly unpopular amongst modern minds, often excused by claiming mental illness or religious superstition. It is important to address these ideas and the wider idea of spiritual warfare at play here in the Gospels. Jesus has come to challenge the authorities on earth, those religious, political, and spiritual. And the agents of his enemies do not take this mission of his lightly, first exemplified here by an "unclean spirit" receiving Christ in a place of holy worship. Note that this is not simply a mentally unwell person, for they correctly identify who Jesus is, a truth that even his closest disciples won't grasp for another 7 chapters. These are not the ramblings of an unwell mind but words of challenge to Christ and his cause from an enemy. With that in mind also the 'exorcism' that takes place is one completely without ceremony, bells, smells, and incantations. Jesus uses his word and authority to instantly and wholly overwhelm Satan and everything he brings to the table; it is a complete and utter victory.

1:38 "... for that is why I came out."

This sentence confirms the priority of His preaching ministry. "I came out" may be ambiguous, either from Capernaum (indicating where his mission journey will go) or from God (indicating his wider earthly mission).





Mark 1:40-2:12

Up to this point in Mark's gospel, Jesus has moved quickly to identify the nature of his ministry, call some disciples, proclaim the good news in the synagogues, cast out demons and heal the sick. The response so far has been awe-inspiring and singularly positive: "What is this? A new teaching with authority!"

In this passage, Jesus performs healings that are unmistakably miraculous and are also accomplished in ways that are either prohibited by OT law or offensive to religious or societal sensibilities. Two new problems now arise: the overwhelming popularity hampers his mission, and we see the beginning of opposition, as not everyone seems entirely pleased with his teaching and activities.



Study #3
Mark 1:40-2:12

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

7:40 And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." 41 Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." 42 And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. 43 And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, 44 and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." 45 But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

2.1 And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. 3 And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. 4 And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. 5 And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 7 "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 8 And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? 10 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— 11 say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." 12 And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



A Pray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

A few questions to consider
What is the leper asking Jesus to do, and what did the leper believe about Jesus? What do the actions by the paralyzed man and his friends reveal about what they believed about Jesus? How does Jesus respond? What does the text tell us about the responses of those who witnessed or heard of these two healings?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- The medical condition of the leper and the paralytic were tragic and life-destroying, yet hteir deepest needs were not physical. How do we know that?
- Compare and contrast the stories of hte leper and the paralytic with respect to Jesus' desire for secrecy, and with respect to the crowds' understanding of the nature of the miracles.
- When Jesus said in Mark 2:5 that he "saw their faith", what faith do you think he was reffering to?

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• Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B A few questions to consider

- How is leprosy an apt and compelling depiction of sin? How does Jesus' treatment of the leper foreshadow the power of the cross?
- If lepers were ceremonially unclean under OT law (see Study Note), did touching the leper make Jesus unclean? What does this say about Jesus, his attitude to the Law and to sacrifice, and his mission?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- How do we appropriate the promises implicit in Jesus' cleansing of the leper?
- In this passage, Jesus intervenes in the lives of two marginalized people in order to make them whole again, but restoring their relationships with God takes priority over the ravages of leprosy and paralysis. How do we organize our lives so that we treat sin with the same seriousness that Jesus does?
- Why do you think God sometimes heals people miraculously and at other times chooses not to?
- What in our life changes when Jesus declares us clean?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.				

STUDY NOTES

1:40 "leper"

Leprosy in the Bible was one of the most feared diseases, and was viewed as practically incurable. The term "leprosy" covered a wide range of visible and often disfiguring skin diseases, including Hansen's disease, which were thought to be contagious. This disease is in a category of its own in that its effects were as much social, emotional and spiritual as physical. Lepers were ceremonially unclean and therefore social outcasts—in addition to the fear of contagion, touching a leper would be to become unclean oneself. So lepers were required to dress in torn clothes, allow their hair to remain disheveled, live in isolation, cover the lower part of their faces and cry out, "Unclean, unclean" if others approached (Lev 13:45-46).

It's worth noting that leprosy was considered direct punishment from God (Lev 14:34; Deut 24:8, 9; Car 26:16-23; 2 Kings 5:26-27; 2 Kings 15:1-7), and that the future hope expressed by the prophets included the removal of all uncleanness (Isa 35:8; 52:1; 64:6; Ezek 36:25; Zech 13:2).

1:43 "sternly charged and sent him away"

"Sternly charged" translates the Greek verb embrimaomai, which usually means to rebuke, scold, censure, or sternly warn. "Sent away" translates the Greek verb ekballō, which usually means cast out or eject by force. Taken as a whole, this phrase suggests, at the very least, a note of anger and disapproval by Jesus.

1:44 "for a proof to them"

This Greek phrase could also be translated "as a testimony against them". Where it is used elsewhere in Mark's gospel, it has a hostile intent. So, in 6:11, Jesus says: "And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them". In this passage, Jesus may have intended it as a warning to the priest that Jesus was there doing clearly miraculous things and they were going to have to take notice of him.

1:45 "talk freely"

"Talk freely" translates the Greek verb (kērussō) routinely used in the proclamation of the gospel—which, in this case, most likely refers to the good news of the leper's cure by Jesus.

2:9 "which is easier?"

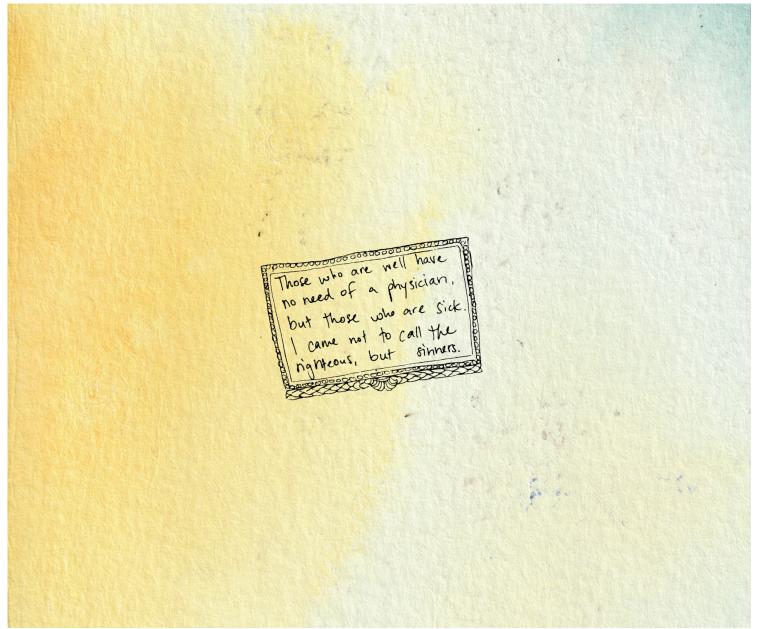
Forgiveness of sins or healing? Considering the widespread view that much illness was direct punishment from God, the distinction between physical healing and forgiveness of sins probably seems much more pronounced to modern ears than it did to Mark's first readers. Just as sin and disease were viewed as closely related, so also were forgiveness and healing.

2:10 "Son of Man"

This is Jesus' favorite self-designation, but it appears to have had no prior messianic significance—the crowds probably hear this as "son of Adam" rather than as a claim to divine authority. The term most likely derives from Daniel 7:13-14, where Daniel, in a vision, sees "one like a son of man" who was apparently human, and yet was coming "with the clouds of heaven". He was presented before the Ancient of Days (7:13) and was given God's glory and kingdom and authority, permitting him to act on behalf of God's people in the cosmic struggle against Satan. The expression carried connotations of power, glory and authority.

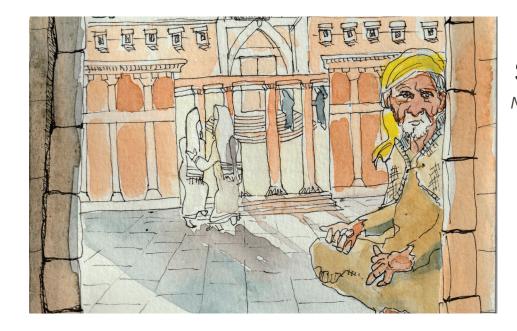






Mark 2:13-3:6

In this passage, we again encounter a Jesus who claims authority that belongs exclusively to the LORD. He reveals himself as Lord of the Sabbath—the holy day set apart for God since the dawn of creation. He also shows an authoritative, ground-shifting understanding of the meaning and purpose of religion and holiness. Religious practices and Sabbath, ritual cleanliness and holiness, all revolve around Jesus himself. They anticipate and announce his arrival. Jesus shows here the kind of kingdom that he is announcing and bringing in. It will be an upside-down kingdom: sinners will be saved and welcomed in, and holiness will not depend on a person's position or religious stature or ritual holiness, but on following Jesus.



Study #4
Mark 2:13-3:6

Jesus Calls Levi

/3 He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. /4 And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. /5 And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. /6 And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" /7 And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

A Question About Fasting

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" 19 And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. 20 The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. 21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. 22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

lesus Is Lord of the Sabbath

23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25 And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: 26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" 27 And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

A Man with a Withered Hand

3.1 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. 2 And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3 And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." 4 And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. 5 And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



A	Pray
A	Fray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include.
characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

•	A few questions to consider Who does Jesus spend his time with and who are called his followers? What reason does he give for this?
•	
•	Who does Jesus spend his time with and who are called his followers? What reason does he give for this? What three questions do the scribes and Pharisees ask Jesus here? Does Jesus answer them? What kinds of responses does he give?
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STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- Read 1 Samuel 21:1-6. David has just fled Saul's courts because Saul wants to kill him. He harbors with Ahimelek the priest who hides him and gives him and his men the consecrated bread to eat. When Saul finds out, he kills Ahimelek and 85 priests, and only Abiathar escapes. Why do you think Jesus brings up David here? Does the story of David and Abiathar have any crossover with his present situation?
- Read Exodus 20:8. The Sabbath was the day of the week set aside for rest in the creation account. The Pharisees began to set up more and more laws around the Sabbath commandment to guard and protect from doing any work on that day. What does the Sabbath mean to the Pharisees in this passage? What does Jesus say it means?

9	What's the Main Idea?		

• Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B A few questions to consider

- What do we learn about Jesus' identity and his mission in this passage?
- How is Jesus' focus and purpose in upholding the Sabbath different from that of the Pharisees? How does he claim the authority to do so?
- What do these stories reveal about the nature of God's kingdom?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- If Jesus is the center of worship, moral law, and religion, how should your faith in him shape your worship and religious practice?
- Is Jesus the focus of your religious observance? Are there any areas of your worship where another focus has superseded Jesus' importance for you?
- What about Jesus' authority in this passage did you think is most disruptive to our Vancouver culture today? How does this shape who you know Jesus to be?
- What attitude towards outsiders does Jesus encourage? How is this encouraging? How is this challenging?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.	

Study #5



2:14 "Levi the son of Alphaeus"

In Luke 5:27-32 the name of the tax collector is Levi, as here in Mark. Somewhat surprisingly, Matthew calls the tax collector Matthew in Matthew 9:9-13. The likeliest solution is that Levi/Matthew had two names, just like Simon/Cephas (Peter), or Joseph/Barnabas (Acts 4:36).

2:16 "why does he eat with tax collectors?"

Taxes are rarely looked upon favourably. Tax collection in Palestine during this period was seen in an especially negative light because most of the money which was levied would go - directly or indirectly - to the Roman empire. Because the Jews saw the Romans as impure outsiders, financial support of the Roman government was considered a betrayal of the Jewish people. The job of tax collector was also a fairly lucrative position, only exacerbating the issue.

2:16 "the scribes of the Pharisees..."

The Pharisees are often considered the bogeymen of the gospel stories, particularly because of their persistent opposition to Jesus' ministry. They were a distinct group of educated Jewish elite, characterized by a zeal for purity through the observance of the Law given by Moses on Mt Sinai. This way of thinking had such concern for legal observance, that there was a secondary set of laws discussing and interpreting the Law. Here the Pharisees are criticizing Jesus because he is a teacher who is fraternizing with the unclean. The Mishnah (the first collection of secondary law) states, for example, that a learned person must not "recline at table in the company of ignorant persons."

2:23 "One Sabbath..."

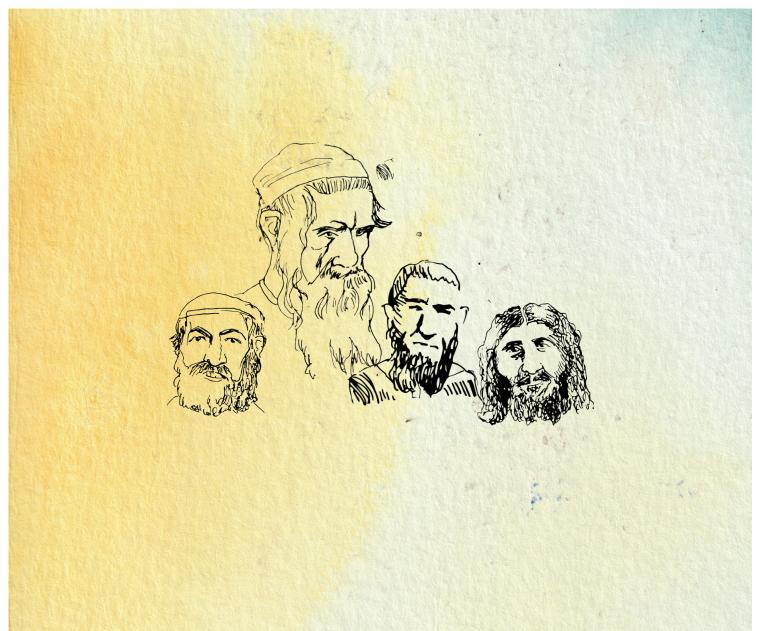
The Sabbath day, or seventh day, of the week, was established by God as a day of rest right from the beginning of creation (Gen 2:1-3). This was affirmed again with the giving of the Law in Exodus (Exod 20:8-11), and defined further as a day of worship in Leviticus (e.g. Lev 23:3), Numbers (e.g. Num 28:9), and Deuteronomy (e.g. Deut 5:14). It was also meant to function as a weekly renewal of covenant (Exod 31:16). Deepening the reality of Sabbath is the law concerning a Sabbath year (Lev 25:1-7), which culminates in the year of Jubilee, when Israel was to "proclaim liberty throughout the land to all..." (Lev 25:10). The Pharisees in Jesus' time had fixated on the idea of strictly limiting the amount and kind of work done on the Sabbath day, in the hope of ensuring that it was a day of rest. Relevant to our passage is the prohibition against harvesting grain (Exod 34:21). Radically, Jesus claims to have authority over the Sabbath (which only God had), and he also deepens its reality. Sabbath rest is meant to be a day of blessing and restoration, not a yoke of burdensome rules.

2:26 "Abiathar the high priest..."

Jesus alludes to a story that comes from 1 Samuel 21. There, David had not yet taken his throne, and was on the run from King Saul. In desperation, and in need of supplies, he takes weapons and bread from the priest Ahimelech (father of Abiathar); bread which was meant to be eaten only by the priests after they had performed their duties on the Sabbath day (Lev 24:8-9). There is no indication from 1 Samuel that David took bread from the Holy Place during the Sabbath. The point is that he ate what was not allowed under the law. Jesus' argument uses Scripture to demonstrate that the Pharisees' narrow interpretation of the Law had misled them.

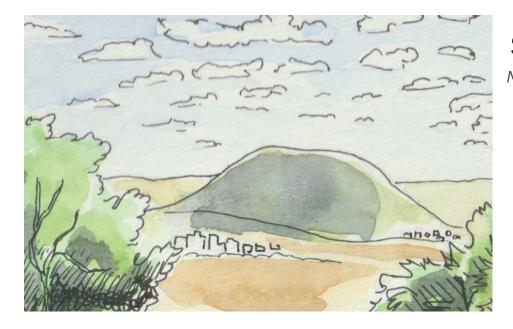
3:6 "the Herodians..."

This term is not very well understood, simply for lack of evidence. In the gospel of Mark they are consistently in strong opposition to Jesus, and probably connected to the political power of Herod Antipas, who we will meet in Mark 6. In Mark 8:15 Jesus warns his followers "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and the leaven of Herod," so the Herodians (on behalf of Herod) would appear to be exerting some sort of influence over the people. There are only two other references to the Herodians in all of the Bible: Mark 12:13 and Matthew 22:16.



Mark 3:7-35

Just before this passage, those in power began to make plans to eliminate Jesus. Jesus withdraws from them, but it is a tactical retreat, giving him yet another chance to display his power and accomplish his purposes. Though official opposition to Jesus' ministry is growing, God's kingdom cannot be stopped, even breaking out of the Promised Land. Outside the boundaries, on the outer edges of this passage, are those who have begun to follow Jesus, even being called his family! And at the heart of this passage is a dire warning to those who would consider themselves inside the family of God, even while they actively rebel against the work of God in their midst. It is those who follow Jesus and do the will of God that are called "brother" and "sister."



Study #5
Mark 3:7-35

Healing and Unclean Spirits

7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea 8 and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. 9 And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, 10 for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. 11 And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." 12 And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

Calling His Followers

/3 And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. /4 And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach /5 and have authority to cast out demons. /6 He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); /7 James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); /8 Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, /9 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Opposition and the Family of God

20 Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. 2/ And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." 23 And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. 27 But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. 28 "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"—30 for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit." 3/ And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. 32 And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." 33 And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" 34 And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



A Pray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

D	A few questions to consider
•	How many scenes are there in this passage? Who are the main characters in each scene?
•	What are the duties and privileges of the apostles whom Jesus calls? What descriptions of Jesus do we get?
	What descriptions of sesas do we get.
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STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- When Jesus goes up on the mountain, it reminds us of Moses and the Israelites. What does this mean for the apostles?
- What exactly were the scribes accusing Jesus of?

• What's the Main Idea?	
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• Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B A few questions to consider

- What do we learn about Jesus' authority over the powers of darkness?
- What is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit?
- Who is inside and who is outside the family of God? Why?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- Why do you think people have so much difficulty understanding who Jesus is?
- If Jesus has bound Satan up and plundered his house, what might that mean for your daily life when confronting sin?
- What are some of the ways you are doing the will of God? Do you think there is anything in particular that you are being called to do?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage.	You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.

STUDY NOTES

3:7 "from Galilee and Judea... Tyre and Sidon..."

An enormous geographic region is being described here, basically all of northern Palestine. Jesus' ministry, though starting small, has begun to attract significant attention. It is also important to note that people outside of the traditional boundaries of Israel are coming to Jesus.

3:13 "He went up on the mountain..."

This scene is probably intended to remind us of the confirmation of the covenant which Israel enters into with God at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 24. The fact that Jesus calls twelve disciples to himself is a symbolic representation of the twelve tribe of Israel. In effect, Jesus is enacting a new covenant and building a new nation for himself.

3:22 "the scribes from Jerusalem..."

These would have been part of the religious elite in Israel, whose job was to read and faithfully transmit Holy Scripture, both in writing and teaching. They were essentially religious lawyers, and because they came from Jerusalem, were probably representatives of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high council. The fact that these men are coming to Jesus in the north from Jerusalem (which was in the south), is another telling indication that Jesus' ministry is drawing a lot of attention. Their opposition to Jesus is particularly troubling, because they are supposed to be the shepherds of Israel who know the will of the LORD, and yet when the LORD is in their midst they do not recognize him.

3:22 "By Beelzebul..."

To make matters worse, the scribes, in their opposition to Christ, accuse him of being a servant of evil spirits. The name Beelzebul is not found in any other documents from this period, but the name translates to "Lord of the Flies" or "Lord of the Swarm." This may be due to the fact that the dump outside of Jerusalem (which would have had innumerable flies) was associated with decay, death, and the forces of evil. This interpretation is bolstered by Jesus' answer to the scribes, when he asks "How can Satan cast out Satan?"

3:29 "but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit..."

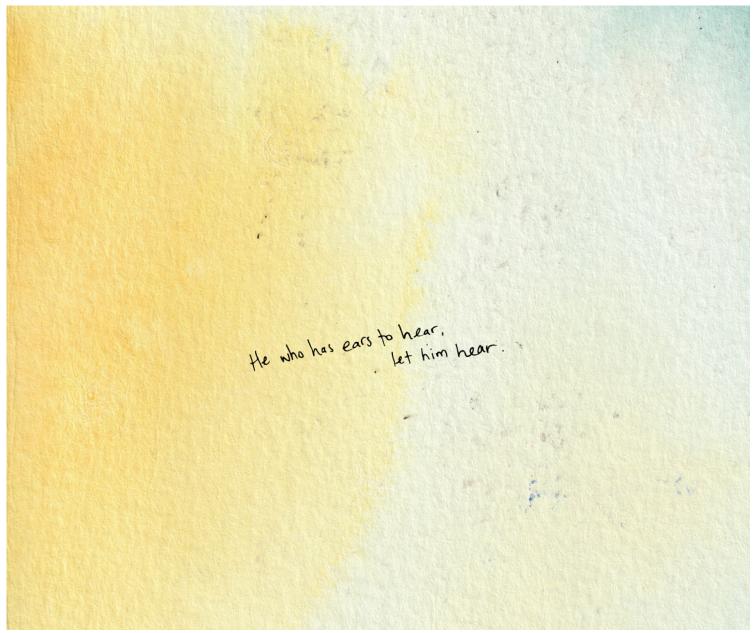
Historically there has been a great deal of (often unhelpful) debate about what Jesus means by blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In context however, it seems reasonably clear: God will not forgive those who persistently reject the blessing of his presence, and instead call his work demonic. In addition to disarming the scribes ludicrous argument, Jesus is making a strong statement about who is at work in him through his ministry.

3:31-35 "Your mother and your brothers..."

Bonds of kinship in Jesus' time were typically much stronger than they our in our Canadian context. For Jesus to reject his family in this way was an absolutely scandalous thing to do. It should be noted that Jesus is in fact not abolishing healthy family relationships, but rather re-orienting them towards his ministry (still a bold and uncompromising thing to do, even by today's standards).







Mark 4:1-34

To this point in Mark, Jesus' proclamation of the good news concerning the kingdom of God (1:14-15) has been met with varying responses: from followers who have responded very positively to Jesus' message, to the enthusiastic but untested crowds who were impressed with Jesus' healings and exorcisms and teaching with authority, to those who reject Jesus from scepticism or disinterest, all the way to those who are so hostile to Jesus that they attribute his work to Satan and wish to destroy him. This passage offers an explanation for that varying response by introducing the reader to the importance and meaning of parables, and by further developing the notion of insiders and outsiders, both of which have to do with the secret of the kingdom of God, the countercultural message of a cross-shaped kingdom with a cross-oriented messiah. The notion of insiders and outsiders is a theme that will continue through to the end of chapter 8, with surprising developments—some of those who assumed they were in the kingdom of God are not the insiders they thought they would be, and some who were outsiders become insiders.



Study #6Mark 4:1-34

Parable of the Sower

/ Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. 2 And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: 3 "Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow. 4 And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. 5 Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. 6 And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. 8 And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold." 9 And he said. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

The Purpose of the Parables

10 And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. // And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables, 12 so that,

"they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven."

Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower

/3 And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? If The sower sows the word. Is And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown: when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. If And these are the ones sown on rocky ground: the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. If And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. If And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, If but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 20 But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold."

6

Parables on Revelation and Response

2/ And he said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under a basket, or under a bed, and not on a stand? 22 For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light. 23 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. 25 For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

Two More Parables about Seed

26 And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground. 27 He sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. 28 The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 29 But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

30 And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? 3/ It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown on the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth, 32 yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and puts out large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



- A Pray
- B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

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• A few questions to consider

- Briefly summarize each section of this passage. What is the main idea of each section?
- What does the passage tell us about why Jesus used parables?
- what kind of teaching does Jesus offer them?

Who are "those outside" (4:11) and what kind of teaching does Jesus offer them? Who are the insiders and

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- This is the first time "the kingdom of God" has been mentioned since 1:14-15. What did "the kingdom of God" mean? When Jesus said to the insiders that "the secret of the kingdom of God" had been given to them, how would Jesus have expected them to understand that? What secret, given by whom, and for what purpose? (Consider Study Note)
- What would Jesus have expected the parable of the sower to teach his original hearers about the kingdom of God? And how did that parable relate to the division between insiders and outsiders?

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This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B A few questions to consider

- If the insiders had been given the secret of the kingdom of God (4:11), how could they fail to grasp the parable of the sowers, which Jesus considered the key to all the other parables (4:13)?
- What do Jesus' comments in 4:11-12 (especially the quotation from Isaiah in 4:12) teach us about salvation and judgment? And how does this connect with the parable in 4:24-25?
- There are four other parables in this passage: the lamp (4:21-22); the measure (4:24-25); the growing seed (4:26-29); and the mustard seed (4:30-32). How does each contribute to our understanding of the growth of God's kingdom?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

A few questions to consider

- When you're struggling, which of the first three soils best describes the nature of your hearing? How can you actively address that struggle?
- The repeated calls to remain attentive to God's word and to hear well were needed because the values of God's kingdom were so thoroughly counter-cultural. That's no less true today than it was in the first century. But what does remaining attentive and hearing well mean today?
- What preconceptions about how God is supposed to work today might actually prevent us and others from welcoming God and his word?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.

STUDY NOTES

4:2 "parables"

In the Greek translation of the OT, parabolē ("parable") translates māšāl, which includes not only illustrative stories, but epigrams, proverbs, pictorial sayings, even riddles. It is speech whose meaning does not lie on the surface, but demands enquiry and insight, so the degree of communication which it achieves will depend on the extent to which the hearer shares the background of thought and values of the speaker. To understand a parable is usually to be changed (or at least challenged to change), not just enlightened.

4:4 "he sowed"

Agricultural metaphors were common in the ancient world because they were so widely understood. The Old Testament frequently uses the image of a vineyard or field or garden to represent Israel, and harvest to represent God's dealings with it (Isa 5:1-7; 37:27; Jer 26:18; Ezek 16:2, 7). And sowing, in particular, has a strong Old Testament pedigree as a metaphor for God's work. God promises to sow Israel to begin her renewal (Jer 31:27-28; Ezek 36:9; Hos 2:21-23).

4:11 "the secret of the kingdom of God"

The Greek word for "secret", in this context, refers to something that cannot be known unless God reveals it. The "secret of the kingdom of God" is the character of God's kingship, which has to do with the sort of messiah that Jesus is and the kind of rule he is inaugurating. As Richard France says in his commentary on Mark, "the message of the kingdom of God is something so paradoxical, so totally opposed to human insight, that it takes nothing less than divine revelation to enable people to grasp it... Even those to whom this secret has been given will continue to struggle with its surprising, and often unwelcome, implications...". Jesus was proclaiming an unexpected kingdom, an unanticipated messiah, and a countercultural people of God.

The secret, at its core, is that, through Jesus, the kingship of God has begun to penetrate human experience in a new way. But the secret is revealed progressively and in various forms: the secret is the explanation of a parable; the secret is that the kingdom includes many more people than everyone expected—especially from the sinners, outcasts, and gentiles; the secret is that the kingdom is advancing not just through miracles but also through suffering and persecution; the secret is that God's kingship starts in smallness and weakness and will ultimately come in power; the secret is that Jesus is headed to the cross, his life is marked by the cross, and his kingship is in the community shaped by the cross; the secret is that he calls others to take up the cross and follow him in self-giving servanthood. And the secret is necessary to make proper sense of the parables.

4:12 Reference to Isaiah 6:9-10

Mark 4:12 is a paraphrase of Isaiah 6:9-10 which, at first glance, appears to say that Jesus spoke in parables in order to hide the kingdom from "those outside" and exclude them from it. Since that would seem to fly in the face of everything we know about Jesus' mission, commentators have long agonized over how to explain away the quotation. The options proposed have been many and varied, but none have been entirely convincing. The best option is to treat the quotation, both in Mark and in its original setting in Isaiah, as irony. In Isaiah, God scornfully tells the prophet to preach in spite of warning him in advance that it will only harden the hearts of the resolutely unfaithful hearers until God carries out punishment. In Mark, the context is similar—the blatant unbelief and opposition to Jesus set forth in chapter 3. Therefore, the suggested translation of 4:12 is: "So that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; because the last thing they want is to turn and have their sins forgiven". So then the quotation of Isaiah 6:9-10 does not mean that "those outside" are denied the possibility of belief; it means that they are excluded from the opportunity of being further instructed in the secret of the kingdom so long as unbelief continues. [Jesus uses irony in a similar manner in 7:8-9] orienting them towards his ministry (still a bold and uncompromising thing to do, even by today's standards).







Mark 4:35-5:43

This rather large section of Mark may at first glance seem an odd place to follow up after such a carefully arranged passage explaining parables and the Kingdom's spread through the word. But the miracles that Christ enacts are here to show how both the word and his authority over humanity's oldest enemies witness to his divinity and majesty. Amidst Jesus' radical displays of power that he poses a question to his followers and to the world at large. Even after all he has done do you still not believe or trust in him? (4:41)



Study #7
Mark 4:35-4:43

Christ's power over nature.

4.35 On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." 36 And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. 38 But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" 39 And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?" 41 And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Christ's power over Satan

5.1 They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. 2 And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs, a man with an unclean spirit. 3 He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain, 4 for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. 5 Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and cutting himself with stones. 6 And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. 7 And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." 8 For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" 9 And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." 10 And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. 11 Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, 12 and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." 13 So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the sea.

5:14 The herdsmen fled and told it in the city and in the country. And people came to see what it was that had happened. 15 And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. 16 And those who had seen it described to them what had happened to the demon-possessed man and to the pigs. 17 And they began to beg Jesus to depart from their region. 18 As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. 19 And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

Christ's power over sickness & death

5:21 And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. 22 Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet 23 and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." 24 And he went with him.

Interlude - It is faith and trust that matter, not a magical garment.

And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. 25 And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, 26 and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. 27 She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. 28 For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." 29 And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. 30 And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" 31 And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?'" 32 And he looked around to see who had done it. 33 But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. 34 And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease."

Christ's power over sickness & death (continued)

5:35 While he was still speaking, there came from the ruler's house some who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?" 36 But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not fear, only believe." 37 And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John the brother of James. 38 They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. 39 And when he had entered, he said to them, "Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but sleeping." 40 And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. 41 Taking her by the hand he said to her, "Talitha cumi," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." 42 And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement. 43 And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



- A Pray
- B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

©	A few questions to consider
•	
	What are the different responses people have to Jesus' actions in the four episodes?
•	What methods does Jesus use to cause the miracles? What are some of the questions Jesus asks in this passage? Which do you think is the most important
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STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- How does this passage show Jesus' speech being used, along with his actions, to demonstrate his power as king?
- What is unique about the situations in this passage that causes Jesus to work miracles?

• What's the Main Idea?	
What's the Main Laea!	

• Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B A few questions to consider

- How does Jesus question the disciples after their reaction to the storm? What is he really after from them?
- What reaction should the locals in vv.15-17 have, instead of fear and rejection?
- Why do you think Jesus did not simply let the woman sneak away after being healed?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- How could you use this passage, and Jesus' miracles, to call others to repentance?
- Both in the face of external and internal chaos Jesus delivers his faithful people.
 - •Where in your life do you feel a lack of control
 - •How may trusting in Christ help that?

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PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.

STUDY NOTES

4:37 "And a great windstorm arose..."

There is tradition, both culturally and biblically, for the usage of storms as a potent metaphor, aside from their natural danger. Being experienced sailors, the disciples know well the perils of such a natural phenomenon, as would also the early readers of Mark. It is the wider Hebrew belief that storms represented the brooding chaos, and untrustworthy power that opposes God. Jesus' calming of this storm is not only him showing his authority over nature, but also its fallen state.

5:13 "...the pigs; and the herd, numbering about two thousand..."

This is indeed a grand total of pigs. While their exact purpose is unclear there was at this time common practises using pigs in pagan rituals outside of Judea in the first century. This amount of the animal would at the very least indicate that this miracle takes place amongst a non jewish audience, and that Jesus values the life of this man far above the life of these animals.

5:22 "Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue..."

A "ruler" in this context was a lay (non clergy) official responsible for the supervision of the synagogue building, and arrangements for its services; and was occasionally given as an honorary title. There is a distinct likelihood that Jarius may have already known Jesus since Christ would often visit the synagogues of cities he traveled to and teach in them.

5:30 "...perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him..."

The "Power of God" refers to the personal power of the even more personal God, which Jesus possesses as the representative of the Father. The woman's healing occurred through God's free will and gracious decision to bestow upon her the power active in Jesus, to honor her faith and not her superstitions. The question Jesus poses to his disciples is likely not due to his own lack of awareness but a desire to make sure the miracle that occurred is understood properly. It is through faith and trust in Christ that this woman has been healed, not through Jesus' magical clothing. He desires a relationship with us, not to be used as a divine miracle battery.

5:41 "...he said to her, "Talitha cumi..."

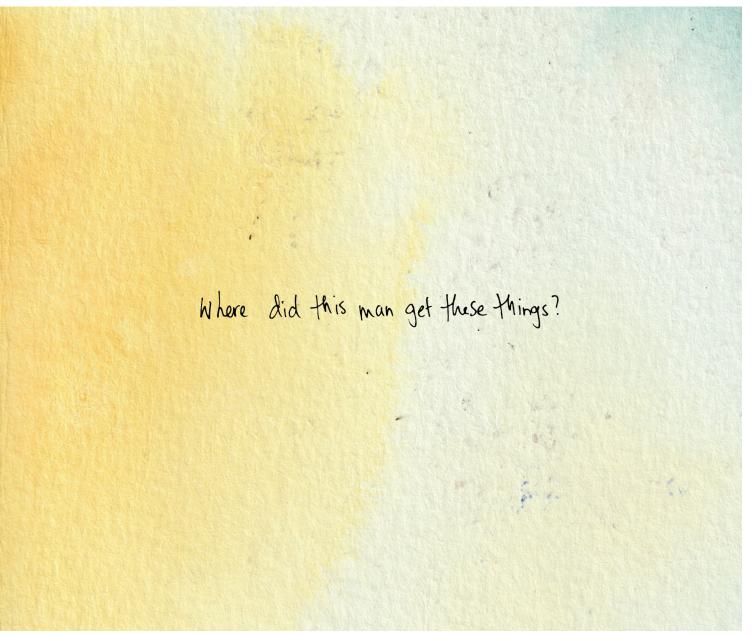
We have here an example of Jesus' literal words of speech rather than a translation. This happens a number of times in Mark (7:31-37, 14:36, 15:34). It is worth remembering that while the New Testament was written in Greek, a common language used for trade, Jesus and his disciples would have spoken different languages. Here he is speaking specifically Aramaic, which is a "cousin" of Hebrew. Sharing the same alphabet but having a different linguistic history it would be a common tongue of the more northern areas of the country such as Capernaum where this miracle takes place. (FACT CHECK PLEASE JOEL!)

5:41 "...Little girl, I say to you, arise."

This is the first miracle in Mark that involves the healing over death itself. Such miracles are of tremendous importance, not only because of their unique nature, but also because of how they point to what Jesus himself will eventually do later in the book. These miracles can often seem unbelievable or extra-ordinary even amongst their peers since they happen so rarely and display such incredible power. Mark as an author is extra careful to note down specific eye-witness details in this account to leave no uncertainty possible. For example: Christ's specific words in their own language, the age of the girl, the list of witnesses, and Jesus' commands to feed her after her waking.

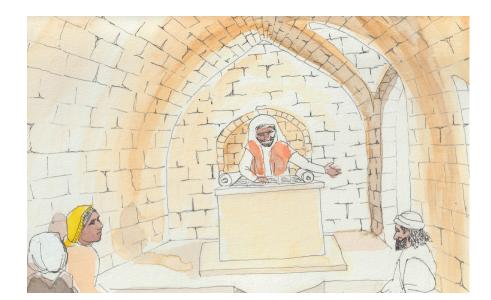






Mark 6:1-29

Jesus' ministry has been a whirlwind of healing and preaching up to this point, but in this passage we get an interesting interruption: here Jesus is unable to do any mighty works because of unbelief. In response, he sends his disciples out, giving them his spiritual authority over the forces of darkness. And Herod, hearing reports of the disciples' ministry in Jesus' name, thinks that John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. This rather striking cluster of stories foreshadows themes that will be developed more fully as Mark's gospel progresses, and it reminds us that being given the Word of God does not entail endless triumphs, but rather a complex, and complicated ministry to all who hear.



Study #8
Mark 6:1-19

Jesus in his Hometown

/He went away from there and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 And on the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things? What is the wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. ✓ And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his own household." 5 And he could do no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. 6 And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went about among the villages teaching.

The Ministry of the Twelve

7 And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—9 but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. 10 And he said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. 11 And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12 So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. 13 And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

The Death of John the Baptist

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some said, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "He is Elijah." And others said, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." 77 For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him and wanted to put him to death. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he kept him safe. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed, and yet he heard him gladly. 21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his nobles and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 For when Herodias's daughter came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests. And the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." 23 And he vowed to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, up to half of my kingdom." 24 And she went out and said to her mother, "For what should I ask?" And she said, "The head of John the Baptist." 25 And she came in immediately with haste to the king and asked, saying, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 And the king was exceedingly sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he did not want to break his word to her. 27 And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison 28 and brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl, and the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard of it, they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



A	Pray
В	Read Closely
	This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.
	A few questions to consider
•	What is the purpose of the disciples' mission? What is similar and different about the people's reaction in vv.2-3 and Herod's reaction in vv.20-21? What kinds of rejection do you see in this passage? Who is doing it and what is the result?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- Who is John supposed to be, and why is his death surprising?
- We get another interesting "sandwich" from Mark, where a story begins (vv.7-13), is interrupted (vv.14-30), and then resumes (v.31 onwards). Why do you think Mark spends so much time telling the story of John's beheading here?
- What is the basic content of the message given by God's agents in these three stories?
- Is there a recent parable that might help explain these different reactions to the gospel?

• What's the Main Idea?		
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• Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

- B A few questions to consider
 - What do you make of Mark 6:5-6?
 - Rejection, or possible rejection is a central theme. Rejection of what? What does this rejection tell us about the human heart? What does it tell us about the work of the kingdom?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- There are many different reactions to the proclamation of the word. How does this help you understand opposition to your sharing of the gospel?
- Have you ever experienced rejection when sharing the gospel? How does this passage help you?
- John the Baptist was an incredible messenger of the LORD, and his death was tragic. What consolation is there, when even the deeds of wicked people seem to go unpunished?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.

STUDY NOTES

6:2-3 "Where did this man get these things?... And they took offense at him."

It is probably best to understand this interesting tension as an example of Jesus' hometown taking offense that he has risen above his supposed lot in life. The questions they ask in v.2 could be read as expressing incredulity or bewilderment, rather than positive amazement.

6:5 "And he could do no mighty work there..."

Given everything else that has taken place in the gospel, it is unlikely that Mark is describing Jesus' inability to heal. Rather, because the circumstances (or soil conditions!) are not right, powerful healings would be inappropriate, because they would not lead to faith. Compare this episode with 6:11-13. The potential hardness of a human heart is no small thing.

6:7 "He gave them authority..."

This idea has been slowly building in the gospel, but now Jesus is making it explicit: his disciples will be his representatives in the world, with the consequence that they will often be opposed as well.

6:8 "He charged them to take nothing for their journey..."

Some interpret this as specific terms for a specific mission that the disciples are being given, rather than a template for all disciples to follow at all times (though the mendicant orders of the Middle Ages are an interesting counter-example). The particular purpose of this mission seems to be that Jesus wants his gospel to be preached throughout all of Galilee before moving on to Jerusalem, hence the speed of their journey.

While we might now take more than one tunic with us, Jesus is beginning a ministry that the disciples will have for the rest of their life; a ministry that they will pass on to other disciples. Here the emphasis is on mobility (not getting tied down by unhelpful material possessions) and hospitality (looking for those who will welcome you and your message). This lean approach to mission is consistent with other exhortations in the New Testament (e.g. Phil 3:8; 2 Tim 2:4), reminding us that denying creature comforts for the sake of Christ and his mission is part and parcel of the life of faith.

6:13 "...and anointed with oil many who were sick..."

Oil was used for a lot of things in the Old Testament, and could include anointing for the purpose of sanctification (e.g. the Levitical priests, the king). By Jesus' time though, the use of oil was often seen as primarily medicinal, rather than ritual or magical. The fact that the disciples' healing ministry includes the use of oil is a simple illustration that their ministry is below that of their master.

6:14 "King Herod heard of it..."

Herod Antipas was the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, the area in which both John and Jesus were ministering. Having already fallen prey to lust in marrying his brother's wife, he now falls further into sin due to the provocative dancing of his step-daughter. It is worth noting that he had no authority to promise half of a kingdom, since his dominion belonged to Rome.

John was arrested back in 1:14, but we haven't had any news of that situation until now, in the form of a remembrance, occasioned by Jesus' own ministry through his disciples. We don't know much about what Herod thought of Jesus during Jesus' ministry, but there have already been some ominous signs of opposition in 3:6. In Mark 8 Jesus will warn about the leaven of "the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." Later in Mark, it is the Pharisees and Herodians who try to trap Jesus (12:13). Locally, Herod was the most powerful, so perhaps his opposition was simply political, but the way in which he engages with John's preaching indicates that there was a spiritual battle going on within himself.

Study #9





Mark 6:30-52

This passage opens with the return of the disciples from their first solo mission, where they were teaching, preaching, healing and casting out demons. They are then privileged to receive further revelation of the kingdom of God in the form of two miracles depicting the divinity and authority of Jesus. Yet Mark concludes the passage by telling us that their hearts were hardened—Jesus was too much, too big, too unexpected for them to fully comprehend.



Study #9
Mark 6:30-52

Five Loaves and Two Fish

30 The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things. 35 And when it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the hour is now late. 36 Send them away to go into the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." 37 But he answered them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?" 38 And he said to them, "How many loaves do you have? Go and see." And when they had found out, they said, "Five, and two fish." 39 Then he commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass. 40 So they sat down in groups, by hundreds and by fifties. 41 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the people. And he divided the two fish among them all. 42 And they all ate and were satisfied. 43 And they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. 44 And those who ate the loaves were five thousand men.

Lord of the Sea

Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. 46 And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray. 47 And when evening came, the boat was out on the sea, and he was alone on the land. 48 And he saw that they were making headway painfully, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them, 49 but when they saw him walking on the sea they thought it was a ghost, and cried out, 50 for they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." 51 And he got into the boat with them, and the wind ceased. And they were utterly astounded, 52 for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



A Pray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

0	A few questions to consider
•	Why did Jesus take the disciples to a remote region on the far side of the Sea of Galilee? And how did Jesus respond to the crowds who disrupted his plans?
•	What is the attitude of Jesus to the disciples throughout this passage, and what can you point to in the text to support your view?
•	How does this crowd differ from other crowds described in Mark? What is the reaction of the crowd to
	the feeding of the 5,000? What is the reaction of the disciples?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- Explain the illustration of the sheep and the shepherd and how it relates to the preceding passage about the death of John the Baptist. (If you need help with this, see Study Notes and Gen 48:15; Num 27:17; Psalm 23:1-4; Isaiah 40:11; Jer 23:2-4; Ezek 34:10-16)
- The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle of Jesus recounted in all four gospels. What was there about it that made it so important? (Consider Ex 16:11-15; Isa 25:6-8; Mark 14:22, 25)
- How does v.52 explain why the apostles "were utterly astounded" (v.51)? What is it that they did not understand about the loaves? How is Jesus' walking on water connected with the feeding of the 5,000?

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• Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B A few questions to consider

- Mark says the hearts of the apostles were hardened even after receiving privileged access to God's kingdom revealed by and through Jesus. In that context, what does the expression "their hearts were hardened" mean? And are followers of Jesus, then and now, in a position to accurately assess the state of their own hearts?
- What do we learn about God's coming kingdom from Jesus' actions in 6:30-44?
- Like some modern Christians, the apostles had no problem with miracles like the cleansing of the leper and the healing of the paralytic, but stumbled when it came to the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus' walking on water. Why is that? Can you be a Christian without believing in miracles? Defend your view.

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- What causes our hearts to be hardened? What is the solution?
- The response of the apostles to the hunger of the crowd was the eminently practical
 choice of sending them away to care for themselves—the kind of choice that we would
 make when confronting a problem that we consider impossibly difficult or too costly?
 But is our compassion meaningful if there is no accompanying action? Are we willing
 to rely on the possibilities of God when faced with seemingly impossible problems.?
- It seems the apostles failed to see the presence of God in the two miraculous events depicted in this passage because those events didn't meet their expectations. Are our hearts ever similarly hardened? Do we fail to recognize God's presence in our lives, seeing only what we consider 'normal' or 'natural'? How do we adjust our vision to see God's presence and providence when events conspire to disappoint us?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.	

STUDY NOTES

6:31, 32, 35 "desolate place"

The Greek word erēmos can be either an adjective (usually translated isolated, desolate, or deserted) or a noun (usually translated desert or wilderness). The significance of the word is obscured by the English translation, but would have been immediately apparent to any Greek speaking Jew. It is the place to which God called the Israelites out of Egypt, and it is the place in which God created the nation of Israel, made covenant with them, made them his people, gave them his law, protected them, fed them, and dwelled with them.

6:34 "sheep without a shepherd"

This is an allusion to Num 27:17 and Ezek 34:5-6. At the end of Moses' life, immediately before Israel was to enter the land, Moses called upon God to appoint his successor so that the Israelites would not be "as sheep that have no shepherd". God appointed Joshua, whose name, in the Septuagint, was translated Iēsous (Jesus). In Ezek 34, God instructed the prophet to prophesy "against the shepherds of Israel" because there was no shepherd and his sheep had become scattered. God said that he himself would be the shepherd of his sheep (34:15) and he would "set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them" (34:23).

6:39 "groups"

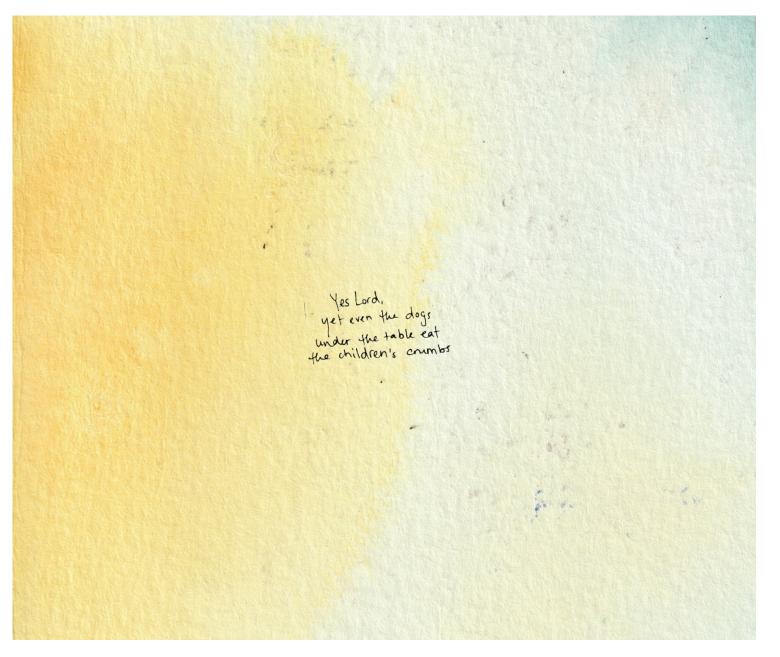
The word "groups" doesn't come close to reflecting the meaning of the Greek word sumposia, which refers to people gathering to enjoy a banquet or drinking party, and suggests a convivial, party-like atmosphere.

6:41 "said a blessing and broke the loaves"

This was most likely the traditional HaMotzi blessing recited before eating bread and one of the most frequently said of the Hebrew blessings: "Blessed art thou, LORD our God, King of the universe, who brings for bread from the earth..."

Study #10





Mark 6:53-7:30

In this passage, Jesus makes some more surprising and counter-intuitive moves. He honours the faith of people who are unclean, sick, and Gentiles, but rebukes the careful, thorough piety of the religious elite! He makes a long detour through Tyre and Sidon—Gentile territory—and has an unsettling conversation with a Gentile woman; unsettling to the disciples as much as to us as readers, though probably in very different ways. In doing so, Jesus deepens and widens his purposes in salvation. He deepens salvation from outer cleanliness to one's inner heart and will, and he broadens salvation beyond just the Jews to the Gentiles and the whole world! The focus of his ministry may be to Israel, but his plan for salvation is universal.



Study #10
Mark 6:53-7:30

Jesus Heals the Sick in Gennesaret

53 When they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret and moored to the shore. 54 And when they got out of the boat, the people immediately jrecognized him 55 and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or countryside, they laid the sick in the marketplaces and implored him that they might touch even the fringe of his garment. And as many as touched it were made well.

Traditions and Commandments

7:1 Now when the Pharisees gathered to him, with some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem, 2 they saw that some of his disciples ate with hands that were rdefiled, that is, unwashed. 3 (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands properly, holding to sthe tradition of the elders, 4 and when they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other traditions that they observe, such as uthe washing of cups and pots and copper vessels and dining couches.) 5 And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to sthe tradition of the elders, wbut eat with rdefiled hands?" 6 And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

"This people honors me with their lips,

but their heart is far from me;

7 in vain do they worship me,

teaching as zdoctrines the commandments of men.'

8 You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."

9 And he said to them, "You have a fine way of arejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.' 11 But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban" (that is, given to God)—12 then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do."

What Defiles a Person

MAnd he called the people to him again and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him." 16f, 17 And when he had entered gthe house and left the people, hhis disciples asked him about the parable. 18 And he said to them, "Then iare you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, 19 since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?"

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(Thus he declared all foods clean.) 20 And he said, "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. 21 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, mmurder, adultery, 22 coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, oenvy, slander, pride, foolishness.23 All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

The Syrophoenician Woman's Faith

24 And from there he arose and went away to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And he entered a house and did not want anyone to know, yet he could not be hidden. 25 But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. 26 Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophoenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 And he said to her, "Let the children be wfed first, for it is not right to take the children's bread and xthrow it to the dogs." 28 But she answered him, "Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." 29 And he said to her, "For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter." 30 And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



- A Pray
- B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

D	A few questions to consider
•	When does the author break the flow of the narrative to explain certain details? What might this tell us about his intended audience?
•	Notice the setting, where is Tyre and Sidon?
•	Who are the characters we meet in this passage? What are their ethnic/religious/social backgrounds? With what tone, actions, and words does Jesus respond to each of the people or groups in this passage?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- What themes and images tie this series of episodes together? How do they build on one another?
- What does Jesus' declaration of all foods as clean imply socially and morally? Can you think of a story in the book of Acts that the verse in 7:19 points towards? What in the surrounding stories also supports this trajectory?
- What is so remarkable about the story in 7:24-30 for the original audience (See Study Notes for help) How does the woman express her faith and show a surprising awareness of Jesus' will and purpose?

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• Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

B A few questions to consider

- Read Isaiah 49:5-6. Is God's plan for Israel and the nations consistent with the way Jesus approaches his mission in these stories? What does that reveal about Jesus' will and mission?
- What do these episodes reveal about our own attempts at holiness? How does one become pure?
- Why is the Gentile woman's reaction God-honoring but the Pharisees reaction is not? What is so important about the inclusion of the Gentiles at this point in Jesus' ministry?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- Evil in our culture is often seen as an external reality, but here Jesus clearly shows it to be an internal one. In what ways do you try to make yourself appear holy? How might God be leading you into greater repentance and trust in his plan for salvation?
- How does the Syrophonecian woman's faith instruct yours as a believer?
- As Christians, it is easy to feel a distance towards outsiders, similar to the way the Jews felt towards the Gentiles. What kind of attitude towards outsiders does this gospel inspire you to cultivate?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage. You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.

STUDY NOTES

"Gennesaret...Tyre and Sidon..."

The region of Gennesaret was along the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, and still part of the Promised Land. In the last episode of the passage, Jesus has moved outside of the land which God gave to his people, by going to Tyre and Sidon. Earlier, during the period of the monarchy, this region belonged to the Phoenician Empire. When the Romans took the land they named the area Syria, which is why Mark calls the woman a "Syrophoenician." This is the area where Elijah fled from Jezebel and Ahab in 1 Kings 19, and the events in Jesus' ministry are probably meant to remind us of that older story.

7:7 "This people honours me with their lips..."

This is a quotation from Isaiah 29:13. The oracle that Isaiah gave then was a condemnation of the elite in Jerusalem who prided themselves in their external religious observance without attending to the heart of the matter. They were experts in the observance of formal piety, but they had not actually surrendered themselves to God. Heart devotion is at the core of all of Scripture, including the Old Testament, but Isaiah's audience, and the Pharisees, had completely missed it.

7:11 "Corban"

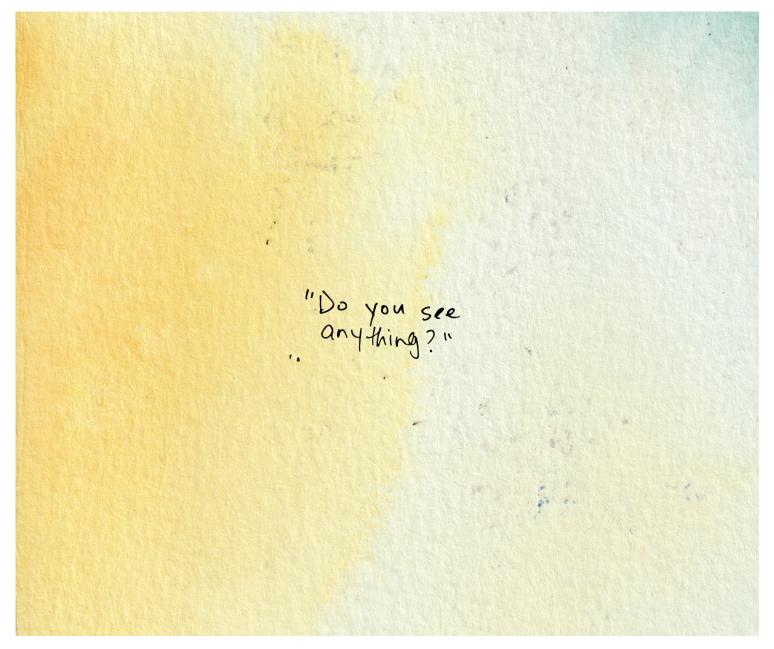
This is the technical Hebrew word for all gifts offered to God. By Jesus' time, invoking an oath of Corban meant dedicating particular items or property for sacred use. So, for example, if a field was dedicated to the temple by its owner, then family members no longer had any legal claim over it, even if there was dire need. The force of Jesus' argument here is that the elaborate system of the oral law which the Pharisees had received and were defending had misinterpreted (and thus contradicted) the intention of Scripture. Thus, the tradition which the scribes and Pharisees defended was built upon a false piety that had nothing to do with true holiness and purity.

7:26 "Now the woman was a Gentile..."

This is not the first time that we have run into people who were considered unclean (e.g. Levi the tax collector in Mark 2:14), but now Jesus ministry is going out to people who were not even considered to be part of the people of God. The strong division between Jews and Gentiles is what lies behind Jesus' comment that the children are fed before the dogs (v.27). Traditionally, a Jew would not even enter the house of a Gentile (e.g. Peter in Acts 10). By contemporary standards this is a shocking statement, but the idea that all peoples of the earth could be equal before God, was a reality never fully explored in the Old Testament (e.g. women like Hagar or Rahab were taken as the exception to the rule, rather than the norm). The coming of Jesus really was new wine for new wineskins.

Study #11





Mark 7:31-8:33

Here in the final passage of the first half of Mark Jesus makes a tremendous amount of effort to cement the overarching lesson that he has been teaching for many chapters. Who is he? This lesson is given to the deaf, the foreign, the blind, the unbelieving and ultimately to his followers. And while they might see him they have yet to truly understand him or what he must do. Rather than simply chronicling the events of Jesus' life the first section of Mark's gospel is cleverly written to emphasize this big lesson. The importance of what Jesus said and did, and the significance of what people did to him depends entirely upon who he truly is.



Study #11

Mark 7:31-8:33

I see people, but the look like trees Walking.

The Deaf Hear

31 Then he returned from the region of Tyre and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. 32 And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him. 33 And taking him aside from the crowd privately, he put his fingers into his ears, and after spitting touched his tongue. 34 And looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." 35 And his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. 36 And Jesus charged them to tell no one. But the more he charged them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. 37 And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, "He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

The Hungry are Fed

8.1 In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat, he called his disciples to him and said to them, 2 "I have compassion on the crowd, because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. 3 And if I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way. And some of them have come from far away." 4 And his disciples answered him, "How can one feed these people with bread here in this desolate place?" 5 And he asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." 6 And he directed the crowd to sit down on the ground. And he took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and they set them before the crowd. 7 And they had a few small fish. And having blessed them, he said that these also should be set before them. 8 And they ate and were satisfied. And they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. 9 And there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. 10 And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

The Seeing are Blind, the Hearing Deaf

If the Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven to test him. I2 And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." I3 And he left them, got into the boat again, and went to the other side. I4 Now they had forgotten to bring bread, and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. I5 And he cautioned them, saying, "Watch out; beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." I6 And they began discussing with one another the fact that they had no bread. I7 And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why are you discussing the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? I8 Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? I9 When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." 20 "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." 21 And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

The Blind See But Not Fully

And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. 23 And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" 24 And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." 25 Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. 26 And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village." 27 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" 28 And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." 29 And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are The Christ." 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him. 31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

STEP 1. WHAT DOES IT SAY?



A	Pray

B Read Closely

This first step is for observation and close reading. What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, et cetera.

• A few questions to consider

- Jesus has done similar miracles to these before, what is unique about these ones?
- What is different about the audience for these miracles?
- Jesus asks a number of piercing questions in this passage? What are some of them? Who does he ask them to?

STEP 2. WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



A Look at the context

This second step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A few questions to consider

- How does the structure of this passage help us in understanding vv.27-33?
- Compare and contrast the Pharisees and disciples:
- How are both of their expectations for Jesus incorrect?
- How do their demands of Jesus make him their adversary?
- How does Jesus rebuke them differently?
- Similarly to last week's passage we have another bread metaphor (7:27-30, 8:14-18). What does the bread in this passage represent? Why is the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod dangerous?

0	What's the Main Idea?		

Stop to Pray

Thank God for all he has revealed to you, ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3. WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

A Thinking Theologically

This third step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage. What do we learn about Jesus' identity and mission? What do we learn about God? What do we learn about us?

- B A few questions to consider
 - Why are verses 11-18 so damning within this context?
 - Jesus' healing of the blind man requires two attempts. What might this healing be trying to show the reader? Especially with verses 27-33 in mind? What does this passage then say about how our spiritual eyes are also opened? Who is responsible?
 - Why does Jesus command the disciples not to reveal who he is in verse 30? Have they managed to grasp who he is if they have not understood his mission?

STEP 4. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

A Living it out

This fourth step is for responding in faith. How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live? Is there a sin to confess? A promise to claim? An example to follow? A command to obey? Knowledge to embrace?

B A few questions to consider

- If you were asked by a non-believing friend who Jesus is and why he came how would you answer? How might this passage be used to make that answer clearer?
- The leaven of cultural, political, and religious falsehoods and temptations still exist. What dangers can you see in the world today? How might they be particularly threatening to your faith?
- This passage shows that even when we don't immediately grasp who Jesus is fully he does not abandon us, but rather desires to fully restore us like the blind man in verse 8:25. How is this message encouraging to you?

PRAYER & PRAYER REQUESTS

Spend some time praying out of the passage.	You can use this space to record prayers or prayer requests.

STUDY NOTES

8:1 "In those days, when again a great crowd had gathered, and they had nothing to eat."

There is some discussion as to whether this miracle is a second retelling of the feeding of 5000 in 6:30-44. This would be a bold assumption and a misunderstanding of Mark's ability as a writer. While the miracles are similar it is the differences that make them important. The previous feeding is more full of Old Testament imagery particularly the theme of Christ being a "shepherd" (see Study #9's study notes for more detail). This miracle takes place in the outer regions of Capernaum amongst a mixed audience. This alongside the other miracles of the passage speak to the wider nature of God's kingdom, its healing, providing, and caring for also the Gentiles. Mark has also included this miracle of a similar nature to enforce the lack of understanding the disciples currently have. People are quick to forget the grace and compassion of God if not reminded. It took Israel only 3 days after having the Red Sea parted before their eyes for them to grumble about not having drinkable water. The disciples have witnessed numerous miracles and still haven't got the lesson.

8:29 "...Peter answered him, "You are The Christ."

Peter at this point accurately becomes a spokesperson for the twelve. "The Christ" is a term heavy with meaning. Echoing Ex 29:7,21; 1 Sam 10:1; 1Ki 19:16 the term comes from the consecration of a king to God's service. This king would be chosen by Him for a particular task, and endowed with power. This term in Jesus' day was commonly used to mean a political figure, a hoped for individual who would rule Israel and free them from their enemies such as Rome. Jesus however understands and uses the term from a biblical and theological understanding. He is the king, come to set the world free from sin and death, to transform and fulfill all of scripture. So while Peter's identification is correct and expresses the truth of the gospel he does not understand what it truly means, (vv31-33) like a blindman half healed seeing people as trees walking (v24).

8:31 "...be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed..."

This grouping of individuals was also commonly known by the term "The Sanhedrin". Both before and after the time of Christ, it was the highest tribunal or council of Jewish religious and political power. Amongst the culture of Israel these were the highest tier of learned individuals. They regulated the yearly calendar, led the staples of jewish culture such as feast days, and wrote and enforced jewish law even over the jewish king. Everyone who was anyone was on this council, and it is these figures Jesus directly identifies who are going to be the ones who will kill him.

8:31 "...be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed..."

8:31-33 marks the beginning of Jesus' second big lesson for his disciples. This is a turning point within the book and is the first of 3 examples of this message coming from Jesus. This lesson of "what he must do" will be a central theme and will be continued upon in the next set of studies in Mark so stay tuned!

8:33 "...Get behind me, Satan!..."

Jesus meets a strong rebuke from Peter with an even stronger comeback. Having just plainly taught them about the truth of what the Messiah must do Peter cannot put these two ideas together. How can someone be a king and reign sovereignly while at the same time suffer and die? Jesus here identifies the source of Peter's remarks as Satan whom he also rebukes directly. Jesus is not calling Peter himself Satan but is again engaging the enemy of God who is attempting to disrupt Christ's mission and tempt him away from completing it. (Mark 1:12-13, 3:23-27, Matthew 4:1-11).

