

Term 1 2023

The gospel of  
**MARK**



This study owes several helpful insights to *Mark For You* by Jason Meyer and *The Servant King* by Paul Barnett, as well as the studies *Mark: Follow Me* (James Hoover: Life Guide), *News of the Hour* (Tony Payne: Matthias Media) and *Mark 1–8: The Coming King* (Tim Chester: The Good Book Company).

# CONTENTS

SERIES OVERVIEW.....	4
1. THE TIME HAS COME.....	6
Mark 1:1–20	
2. THE GREAT PHYSICIAN: PART I.....	9
Mark 2:1–17	
3. IDENTITY CRISIS.....	12
Mark 3:20–35	
4. CAN YOU HEAR ME?.....	15
Mark 4:1–20	
5. FEAR AND FAITH.....	17
Mark 4:35–5:20	
6. THE GREAT PHYSICIAN: PART II.....	20
Mark 5:21–43	
7. A DANGEROUS CALLING.....	23
Mark 6:7–29	
8. THE GREAT PROVIDER.....	26
Mark 6:30–56	
9. TWISTED TEACHING.....	29
Mark 7:1–23	
10. CAN YOU SEE ME? .....	32
Mark 8:27–9:13	



# SERIES OVERVIEW

The Gospel of Mark is probably the earliest of the four Gospels, written between thirty and forty years after Jesus' crucifixion. It was written while many of those who were involved in the events (as participants or eyewitnesses) were still alive.

Jesus is the uncontested subject of the Gospel of Mark. Above all, Mark's portrayal of Jesus is characterised by three factors: his divine authority, his mission as the suffering Servant of God, and his divine Sonship.

## AUTHOR

John Mark (or Mark as he is commonly referred to) is not identified as the author within the Gospel itself, but it was widely accepted that Mark was the author by the early 2nd century A.D. Mark accompanied Barnabas and Saul on the first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:4). The last we know of, Mark was working with Peter in Rome (1 Pet 5:13). Although Mark himself was not an apostle, he was a faithful interpreter of the apostle Peter's testimony.

## THEMES

There are two distinctive themes that stand out in Mark: *discipleship* and *faith*.

### *Discipleship*

There is a causal relationship between the ministry of Jesus and that of his disciples: as the Son of Man serves in humility without regard to self and even in suffering, so too must his disciples (8:34). Ironically, however, when one loses one's life *for* Christ, one finds it *in* Christ (8:35). Discipleship in Mark is repeatedly defined by *simple proximity to Jesus*: sitting around him (3:34; 4:10) and hearing him (4:1-20). The simple act of hearing and following Jesus is more



important than the disciples' complete understanding of him (8:22-26), which can only come from the vantage point of the cross.

### *Faith*

For Mark, discipleship and faith have no meaning apart from following the suffering Son of God. Faith isn't a magical formula; it depends on repeated hearing of his word and participation in his mission. Mark shows two different faith responses to Jesus. On the one hand, a number of individuals display insights and acts of faith that are remarkable for their accuracy. Ironically, these individuals as a rule come from outside Jesus' immediate circle of followers and are often women or Gentiles. On the other hand, those who would seem to have a faith advantage – Jesus' family (3:31-35), his hometown (6:1-6) or the religious experts (3:22-30) – are, ironically, the least understanding and more resistant. Even the faith response of Jesus' inner circle, and particularly the Twelve, is halting and incomplete. For this group, faith comes slowly, even laboriously, by repeatedly hearing, receiving and finally bearing fruit (4:10-20).

## **STRUCTURE**

Mark is a Gospel of two halves. The first half focuses on Jesus as the one who has brought God's kingdom 'near'. There are glimpses of his true identity, climaxing in Jesus' revelation of what it means for him to be the Messiah (i.e. glory and hope through suffering, death and resurrection) and the wonder of the transfiguration (8-9).

The second half highlights how the Kingdom of God that Jesus brings means an inherent clash with human kingdoms, be they religious, social, or political. This clash ultimately leads to Jesus' death (at the hands of human rulers) and resurrection.

This study series focuses on the first half of the Gospel (**1:1-9:13**). Our hope is that you will hear Jesus' call to follow him in every aspect of your life, and that you will join Jesus in His mission to see the kingdom of God proclaimed and repentance and the forgiveness of sins preached to the very ends of the earth.



# THE TIME HAS COME

Mark 1:1–20

1. What do people say about Jesus? What opinions do you hear in the media, at work, around about? On what do people base their opinions?

READ MARK 1:1–3

2. List the key words in verse 1. What do you think each means?

In vv.2–3, Mark quotes from two OT passages: Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3. Both passages speak of a messenger/servant coming to prepare the way for God. In Malachi 3:1 God's messenger is coming to judge those who continue to reject God. In Isaiah 40:3 God's servant is coming to save those who trust in God.

3. So, since each passage ultimately has Jesus in view, what do these quotes tell us about him?

- How does this make you feel? Does it change your view of Jesus? Why/why not?

READ MARK 1:4–13



The focus shifts to a person: John – the messenger referenced in the Old Testament quotes. John operates in the desert and wears the distinctive dress of the OT prophet Elijah.

**4.** We're told John preaches 'a baptism of repentance and the forgiveness of sins' (v.4). What does 'repentance' mean? Why is this good news?

- Do you see yourself as someone in need of repentance?

**5.** What major difference does John outline between himself and the 'one' he's preparing the way for? Why is this significant?

**6.** Why do you think Jesus comes to get baptised by John (consider what baptism symbolises)?

**7.** The voice of the Father in heaven alludes to Psalm 2:7-8. What does this Psalm – and the Father's declaration – tell us about Jesus?

Verses 12–13 continue to set the stage for Jesus' public ministry. Jesus further identifies with God's people by following the movements of Israel in exodus and reliving their experiences: he's in the wilderness for 40 days (symbolic of 40 years); he is tempted; and he is protected by God (v.13b). Unlike Israel, however, Jesus remains faithful to the Father throughout.



## READ MARK 1:14-20

8. When does Jesus start preaching? What is significant about this?
  
9. Verses 16–20 recount Jesus' calling of some fishermen (two sets of brothers) to follow him.
  - a) What does Jesus promise to do for these men?
  
  - b) What is their response – and what are the consequences of it?
  
  - c) What does this tell us about what it means to follow Jesus?

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

10. If someone asks you, 'Who is Jesus?', how would you reply? How has this study affected your answer?
  
11. When is following Jesus particularly hard for you? Why is it worth it?





# THE GREAT PHYSICIAN: PART I

Mark 2:1-17

1. Is there a time you can think of when you had a problem you thought was big, only to realise you had a much bigger problem?

READ MARK 2:1-7

2. Describe the scene in the opening 2 verses.

Mark goes on to tell us about 4 men who bring their paralysed friend to Jesus. They can't reach Jesus due to the crowd and so, incredibly, they dig a hole in the roof of the house and lower their friend down to Jesus! This shows their desperation to help their friend. It also shows they really believe Jesus can help in some way.

3. Once the paralysed man is lowered down, what does Jesus say to him? Why is this significant?

4. Consider the reaction of the scribes (experts in the Jewish law) to what Jesus says:

- In what way is it warranted?
- In what way is it *unwarranted*?



## READ MARK 2:8–12

**5.** Jesus, in another indication of his divine nature, knows ‘in his spirit’ what the scribes are thinking, and so he asks them a question. What is it? What would be your answer?

The title ‘Son of Man’ originates from a vision in Daniel 7:13–14: God gives a human-divine figure (‘one like a son of man’) complete power and authority, and an eternal kingdom. The title had come to refer to the anticipated Messiah. By applying it to himself (v.10) Jesus says that he is the human-divine Messiah. (For other NT references to the Son of Man see also John 5:27, Acts 7:56, Revelation 1:13, Revelation 14:14).

**6.** Jesus hangs his Son of Man claims on whether he can do the impossible right here (v.10): he commands the paralysed man to get up and walk – and he does!

- What is the reaction of the people in the crowd?
- What does it indicate?

## READ MARK 2:13–17

**7.** Compare Jesus’ interaction with Levi (vv.13–14) with his earlier interaction with the fishermen (1:14–20). What are the similarities? What are the differences?



**8.** Mark tells us that Jesus then ends up eating at Levi's house with many other 'tax collectors and sinners' – a move the scribes question (v.16). What is the implication of their question?

**9.** Consider Jesus' response (v.17):

- What point is he making?
- Is Jesus saying that there are 'righteous' people who don't need forgiveness? Why/why not?

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

**10.** How do the things that Jesus reveals about himself in this passage challenge you? How do they give you comfort and assurance?

**11.** What do your non-Christian family and friends think about how to get right with God? How can you help them to understand what Jesus says about sin and forgiveness?

**12.** What are some things about church/church culture that make our society's 'tax collectors and sinners' feel they can't/shouldn't come – that Jesus wants nothing to do with them? How might we change this?



# IDENTITY CRISIS

Mark 3:20–35

1. What would you consider to be the *key parts* of your 'identity'?

READ MARK 3:20–22

2. What does Jesus' family leave home to do, and why do they do it?

3. What is the accusation from the scribes who have come down from Jerusalem?

4. What is the issue at the heart of this accusation?

There is a connection here between the scribes' accusation and the actions of Jesus' family: both minimise or dismiss Jesus' true authority, and both end up trying to restrain Jesus in some way.

READ MARK 3:23–30

5. Jesus responds with two parables/illustrations. How is each an answer to the scribes' accusation?



**6.** Jesus concludes with a strong warning to the religious leaders in vv.28–29.

- i. What is it?
- ii. Does this trouble you? Why/why not?
- iii. Why were the religious leaders in danger of this (and how does this help our understanding)?

### READ MARK 3:31–35

**7.** What is Jesus' response to the news that his family has arrived and are 'asking for him'?

**8.** What do you think Jesus means by this? (Is he rejecting his family??)

- If we learn to see ourselves as part of God's family, rather than merely his servants or subjects, how might that transform our attitudes towards Jesus' commandments?

### FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

**9.** What do you think allegiance to Jesus looks like today?



**10.** Both Jesus' family and the religious leaders minimise or dismiss Jesus' true identity/authority. Are there areas in your life where you find yourself minimising or dismissing Jesus' words or authority – aspects that are not yet surrendered to him yet?

**11.** Jesus faced opposition and rejection – even from those closest to him. When we experience the same for our allegiance to Jesus (maybe even from those closest to us) what comfort do we have?



# CAN YOU HEAR ME?

Mark 4:1–20

1. What are some different responses to the gospel you've seen people have over the years?

READ MARK 4:1–20

2. What idea/ideas seem to dominate this passage (note words or phrases that are repeated)?

3. Look at vv.1–9. Summarise Jesus' parable: what are the 4 different places and outcomes of the farmer's seed sowing?

Verse 10 sees a change in setting: Jesus is no longer in a boat teaching vast crowds on the shore, he's 'alone with the Twelve', his disciples – and the disciples have some follow-up questions.

4. What does Jesus say has been given to the Twelve (v.11)? What do you think this means?

5. Why does Jesus say that he teaches in parables? Note the 'so that' (v.12)?



- Does this bother you? Why/why not?
- What does a willingness to ask indicate about a willingness to hear?

**6.** Consider Jesus' explanation of the parable in vv.14–20. How does the kingdom of God come to people?

**7.** In your own words, describe the different responses to the kingdom – perhaps illustrating them from your own experience.

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

**8.** What does this parable say about you? What kind of 'soil' (to use Jesus' imagery) would you say you are?

**9.** How should this parable shape the way in which Christians spread the message of the kingdom of God?

**10.** How should we react when people are indifferent to what we tell them about the Christian message? Or even respond enthusiastically, but then never really grow and finally give up altogether? Have we failed? What hope does this parable give?





# FEAR AND FAITH

Mark 4:35–5:20

**1.** What are some situations in which you've been afraid?

- What do you think lay behind that fear?
- How have you responded to/dealt with that fear?

READ MARK 4: 35–41

**2.** What happens when the boats set out to cross the sea of Galilee (v.37)?

**3.** Considering many of the disciples were Galilean fisherman, why do you think they woke Jesus?

The Sea of Galilee is situated 214 metres below sea level so the air over it is warm. When cold air from the surrounding mountains blows across it, fierce storms can build very quickly as the cold air drops and warm air rises, taking sailors by surprise.

**4.** What does Jesus' response to the wind and the waves tell us about Him? (See also Psalm 107:23–31)



5. Consider Jesus' words in v.40. Is fear the opposite of faith? Why/why not?

6. What makes the disciples terrified in verse 41? What sort of fear is this?

- Can you think of a time when you were facing something tough or uncertain and the Holy Spirit reminded you of this truth – that God is with you and to trust Jesus?

### READ MARK 5:1-20

7. What facts tell us this man is in a desperate situation?

8. Curiously, how does the evil spirit speak to Jesus?

- Have you ever had any experience with anything like this (i.e. demonic possession)? How do you understand/respond to an account like this as someone living in Sydney in 2023?

9. Retell what happens to the evil spirit (vv.8-13). Does this bother you? Why/why not?



- What does this show about the value Jesus places on the man – indeed, on people in general?

For the second time in two accounts we read of people being afraid *after* Jesus has fixed the problem. Most likely the reason for their fear was the same as the disciples: they did not understand how this had happened; all they knew was that they were in the presence of one more powerful than the demons.

**10.** Why do you think Jesus wouldn't let the man follow Him?

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

**11.** What difference does the understanding that Jesus is God – i.e. all-powerful, in control – make to you? What difference does it make to you:

- Materially?
- Spiritually?

**12.** How can you express your faith in Jesus this week?

**13.** What great things has Jesus done for you? Whom could you tell about those things?



# THE GREAT PHYSICIAN: PART II

Mark 5:21–43

1. Health professionals (nurses, doctors, etc.) consistently top lists of 'society trust'. Why do you think this is so?
2. Consider all of Mark 5:21–43. What do you notice about the structure of the passage? In what order do the events unfold?

READ MARK 5:21–23

3. Have a look at vv.21–23. Who is Jairus? Why is this significant?

READ MARK 5:24–34

4. Consider what Mark tells us about the woman in vv.25–26. Is her problem just a health problem?

Like Jairus with his daughter, the woman believes that if she just has contact with Jesus she'll be healed. She does, and she is – instantly. She clearly wants to be surreptitious, but Jesus is aware of the healing power she's experienced, and he asks, "Who touched my robes?"



**5.** Why do you think Jesus asked who touched him? After all, as the disciples point out, there are lots of people touching him!

**6.** The word for 'made well' is also the word for 'saved'. What do you think Jesus means when he says, "Your faith has made you well" (v.34)? Has she, in effect, 'saved' herself?

- How do you understand 'faith'? How would you define it for someone?

### READ MARK 5:35–43

The account appears to take a tragic turn: people from Jairus's house come and tell him that Jesus shouldn't be bothered anymore because Jairus's daughter has died.

**7.** In response to the news of the girl's death, Jesus tells Jairus not to be afraid, only to "believe". Believe what exactly?

**8.** Jesus tells all the people weeping and wailing at Jairus's house that the girl "is not dead but asleep". Is this literally true? Why/why not?



**9.** Jairus's faith in Jesus is justified: Jesus brings his daughter back to life! What are some things that stand out to you in vv.42–43?

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

**10.** Do Jesus' miracles mean that Christians now can expect a life free of troubles such as sickness? Why/why not?

**11.** What was Jesus' priority while on earth (consider Jesus' instructions not to tell anyone about the miracle)? What part did the miracles play? What was their purpose?

**12.** We too have been called to 'believe' in Jesus. In what way is it the same as the woman and Jairus? In what way is it different?



# A DANGEROUS CALLING

Mark 6:7–29

1. What's a time you found something hard because you had wrong expectations? How did that end up?

READ MARK 6:7–13

2. What do Jesus' instructions to the Twelve tell us about the kind of ministry they were to have?

3. What do you make of the fact that Jesus gives the disciples 'authority over unclean spirits'? Were the disciples primarily to be exorcists?

- Where have you seen Jesus' power and authority on display?
- Consider what we can learn here about Christian mission: how were the disciples organised? Why might this have been so? What are the problems of 'solo' mission, both for disciples and hearer?

READ MARK 6:14–29



4. What were some people's thoughts at the time about who Jesus was (vv.14–15)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Why did Herodias want John imprisoned and killed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Why did Herod want John kept alive? What does this tell us about what kind of 'soil' King Herod was (think back to the parable of the sower)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. This flashback to the execution of John the Baptist interrupts the account of Jesus' sending out the Twelve to preach and heal. Why do you think Mark recounts it here?

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

8. Where have you seen Jesus' power and authority on display?





**9.** Jesus prepared his disciples to be rejected. Indeed, just prior to this Jesus was himself rejected – in his hometown (6:1–6)!

- Have you experienced this kind of response to sharing the gospel? What was it like?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Why is it helpful to prepare Christians for this kind of response?

**10.** Where does unbelief show up in your life – even in partial, not full-blown ways? What areas of your life do you need to bring to Jesus in faith?

**11.** Christian persecution looks different around the world. How can we support persecuted Christians more effectively? What confidence can we have in praying for them?



# THE GREAT PROVIDER

Mark 6:30–56

1. Share a time when you lacked perspective – where you couldn't see the overall picture of a situation; maybe a situation where, had you taken the time, seeing the bigger picture would have made it much easier to deal with.

## READ MARK 6:30–32

2. Disciples have returned from the mission field after being sent by Jesus in the previous section. They come together and Jesus takes them away to be alone. From these verses, how do you think their missions went?

3. Compare v.34 with Isaiah 40:9–11. What insight do we get into Jesus and who he is in these verses?

- In what way/to what extent should we share Jesus' attitude towards the lost?

## READ MARK 6:35–44

4. What were the disciples' concerns about the crowd? What do you suspect they wanted Jesus to do?



- What do you make of the disciples' concerns and suggestions? Put yourself in their shoes: are they reasonable/unreasonable?

5. What is Jesus' response? And what does his response tell us to about the future for the disciples?

### READ MARK 6:45–52

6. What are the different emotions that the disciples go through on the water?

7. Consider Jesus' words in v.50:

- What comfort would they have been to the disciples in that moment?
- What else do these words echo from other parts of the Bible?

“According to the Talmud (traditional Jewish text), Jewish seafarers kept a paddle engraved with the words, 'I am that I am, Yahweh, the Lord of hosts [...] Whenever their safety was threatened by high seas, the sailors would beat the waters with this paddle. But Jesus did not beat the waters with a piece of wood: he walked upon the sea and declared himself to be 'I am' And when Jesus climbed into the boat – the wind died down at once. His words appear to have been carefully chosen.”

*Paul Barnett*



## 8. Why didn't the disciples understand the miracles that Jesus did?

“Just as their hardened hearts prevented them recognising Jesus as the Son of God when the loaves were multiplied, so, too, they did not see who he was even in this most spectacular demonstration of his divine power.”

*Paul Barnett*

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

9. How has this passage changed/challenged/reaffirmed your view and understanding of who Jesus is?

10. Reflect on your own experience:

- When in your Christian walk have you been focused on the immediate situation you were in and not seen the bigger picture?
- How can we be more aware of the greater need/mission in our daily lives?

11. How could you use this passage to help a non-Christian understand more about who Jesus claimed to be to help them see him clearly?



# TWISTED TEACHING

Mark 7:1–23

1. What are some church traditions that you either hold to dearly yourself, or know of others/churches holding to dearly?

## READ MARK 7:1–5

2. Who is gathering around Jesus? Why is where they have come from relevant?

3. What is their problem with Jesus' disciples – hygiene?

4. What is the religious leaders' point in addressing this – to correct the disciples? (Consider to whom the question is asked in v.5, and how the disciples are described.)

- Think of the church traditions that you either hold to yourself, or know of others/churches holding to. Do you know where they've come from and what the thinking is behind them?



In v.5, the religious leaders ask two questions. Jesus answers their first question (about the tradition of the elders) in vv.6–13, and their second question (about ritual uncleanness or ‘defilement’) in vv.14–23.

### READ MARK 7:6–13

**5.** Look at Jesus’ response in vv.6–8, and his quotation from Isaiah. What’s his point? What happens when we add tradition to God’s word?

**6.** In vv.9–13 Jesus talks about the system of *Corban* – dedicating something to God (usually wealth) – as an example of bad tradition.

- What was the argument of the religious leaders for practising *Corban*?
- What was the result of a religious tradition like *Corban*?
- What was the main point that the Pharisees were missing in their ‘devotion’ to God?

### READ MARK 7:14–23

**7.** Jesus gets to the heart of ‘uncleanness’/‘defilement’. According to Jesus, what does *not* make a person defiled (or undefiled)?



8. What *does* make a person unclean/defiled?

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

9. Why do people like traditions? What's the real reason people stick to them (often instead of God's word)?

10. Harmful tradition often begins with good intentions. As Tim Chester puts it: *how can we prevent today's 'practical application of God's word' becoming tomorrow's 'tradition of the elders'?*

- Are there any ways we might be in danger of this at Minchinbury?

11. Jesus tells us what makes a person unclean. What *can* make us clean (maybe look at 1 John 1:7–9)?

- What do other religions teach about 'uncleanliness' or 'sinfulness' and how people purify themselves?
- What do people usually (and wrongly) believe about how Christianity makes us right with God? What should our non-Christian contacts be learning from us about Christian faith?



# CAN YOU SEE ME?

Mark 8:27–9:13

1. Think of a time you met someone you consider 'great' or important. What was it about them that conveyed their greatness/importance?

In the account just prior to this is, of Jesus healing a blind man, Mark records this healing happening in two stages: Jesus spits and rubs on the man's eyes, the man partially sees, then Jesus places his hands again and the man's sight is fully restored. This miracle is both a healing and a parable, an object lesson. The blind man represents the disciples: they have partial spiritual sight, but also spiritual blindness.

READ MARK 8:27–30

2. Who do the people say that Jesus is?

3. Why would people have thought that Jesus was any of these?

- What do you hear people saying about Jesus (in the media, at work, around about)? On what do people base their opinions?

4. Jesus then asks Peter directly: 'Who do you say I am?' What is Peter's response?





## READ MARK 8:31–9:1

**5.** Right after Peter acknowledges Jesus to be the Messiah, Jesus begins to explain what will happen to him. What is Peter's reaction? Why do you suppose he reacts so strongly to what Jesus has said?

**6.** What's Jesus' response to Peter? Why is it so harsh?

**7.** Why do you think Jesus warns the disciples in v.30 not to tell people about him?

- Think back over your own experience of coming to understand who Jesus really is. Do you resonate with Peter? Are there particular moments you recall of going from partial to full sight?
- Consider Jesus' words in vv.34–38. How does Jesus' definition of discipleship challenge you today? How does it encourage you?

## READ MARK 9:2–13

**8.** On the mountaintop three of Jesus' disciples are given a glimpse of Jesus' glory.

- What do they see?



- What are they reminded about (v.7; cf. 1:11)?

**9.** What will happen to Jesus (vv.9–13)? Consider the significance of Jesus' saying this here and now.

**10.** Read **2 Peter 1:16–19**. Peter here was writing to people who were questioning whether Jesus would ever come again, and he says that the transfiguration confirms the words of the prophets (v.19). What is the connection between the transfiguration and Jesus' second coming?

- Does Jesus' coming in glory – his 'second coming' – factor into your daily life? or is it 'out of sight, out of mind'? How can you live in light of the second coming more?

## FINAL THOUGHTS AND APPLICATION

**11.** 'Jesus doesn't want to be proclaimed as King unless he is proclaimed as the King who must die.' Think of examples of how people teach about Jesus but ignore the cross and the call to follow his example.

- What will be the effect of our evangelism if we fail to proclaim the cross of Jesus?

**12.** The heavenly statement 'Listen to him' (9:7) probably alludes to Deuteronomy 18:14-22. How can we listen to Jesus today?



