

# Mark "Mark"



An "Open Learning"  
reflective bible study of Mark chapter 1

# Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

What makes this gospel unique?

## ***Reflection:***

What do you see, what is God saying to you? Is the Holy Spirit talking to you about something more?

## ***Personal application:***

Am I to do something practical?

Mental/spiritual/emotional.

Shall I draw it, say it, sing it?

## ***Prayer Time:***

Prayer Pointer, specific in faith

## Monday 1 January

### Read Mark chapter 1

Revelation 4:7 describes the cherubim around God's throne as beings with four faces: the face of a *lion*, of a *calf*, of a *man*, and of an *eagle*. By long tradition, the church has associated one of these "faces" with each one of the Gospels, according to the character and message of the Gospel. In the cathedrals of Europe, you will find the motif repeated, of each one of these creatures, typically with a book. By tradition, the creature that represents the Gospel of Mark is the *calf* or the *ox* - a creature of *work* and *service*. The Gospel of Mark shows Jesus as the *Servant* of God, as a *Workman* of God.

- a. For this reason, the Gospel of Mark is a "busy" book. In this Gospel, Jesus seems the busiest, moving from one event to another quickly. One of the key words in the Gospel is *immediately*, occurring more than 40 times in Mark. We see Jesus as a *servant* busy meeting needs and busy being God's Messiah.
  
- b. In the Gospel of Mark, the emphasis is on the deeds of Jesus more than on the *words* of Jesus. "The Gospel of Mark pictures Christ in action. There is a minimum of discourse and a maximum of deed." (Robertson)

***Reflection:***

Am I readily available when God prompts me to action?  
Is my heart open to the Holy Spirit to differentiate  
between what I think is urgent and God's priorities?

***Personal application:***

Can I start with small actions at home, at work, or  
church? Can I plan to do something for the kingdom of  
God every day.

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, help me to be a believer who puts daily actions to  
my faith.

## Tuesday 2 January

### Read Mark chapter 1

Strong church tradition makes the Apostle Peter the main source of Mark's gospel. Some think of Mark as "The Gospel According to Peter."

- a. One indication of Peter's influence is that Peter speaks very affectionately of Mark: *Mark my son* (1 Peter 5:13), and he says that Mark was with him.
  - i. Mark (who is also called John-Mark in passages like Acts 12:25) was a "failure" in ministry as pictured in the book of Acts with Paul (Acts 15:36-41). His relationship with Paul was restored in the end (2 Timothy 4:11).
  - ii. Like Mark, Peter knew what it was like to be a "failure" in following Jesus when he denied Him three times, but he was also restored in the end.
- b. Another indication of Peter's influence is the vivid, eyewitness detail of this Gospel. It is "fullest of striking details that apparently came from Peter's discourses which Mark heard, such as green grass, flower beds (6:39), two thousand hogs (5:13), looking roundabout (3:5, 34)." (Robertson)
  - i. "Mark's Gospel throbs with life and bristles with vivid details. We see with Peter's eyes and catch almost the very look and gesture of Jesus as he

moved among men in his work of healing men's bodies and saving men's souls." (Robertson)

- c. A third indication of Peter's influence is that "Peter usually spoke in Aramaic and Mark has more Aramaic phrases than the other, like *Boanerges* (3:17), *Talitha cumi* (5:41), *Korban* (7:11), *Ephphatha* (7:34), *Abba* (14:36)." (Roberston)

***Reflection:***

Do I have a good and open relationships with a mentor or friend? Am I willing to give others a new start?

***Personal application:***

How can I help someone just starting out on their faith journey?

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, help me to build open and vulnerable relationships with other believers

## Wednesday 3 January

### Read Mark chapter 1

Many believe Mark to be the first of the four Gospels written, and that it was written in Rome for Romans.

- a. Most scholars agree that the Gospel of Mark was the first of the four written, though some believe that Matthew may have been Gospels is the early date of Mark's Gospel. Precisely how early is not definitely known, but there are leading scholars who hold that A.D. 50 is quite probable." (Robertson)
- b. Mark was not one of the twelve disciples. Perhaps the only mention of him in the gospel is a shadowy one in Mark 14:51-52. As a youth, he may have been part of the larger group that followed Jesus.
- c. The early church met at the home of Mark's mother, Mary, in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12).
- d. To the hard working and accomplishment oriented Romans, Mark wrote a gospel that emphasizes *Jesus as God's Servant*. It's possible that because no one cares about the pedigree of a servant, the gospel of Mark has no genealogy of Jesus.
  - i. Another indication that Mark wrote his Gospel for the Roman mind is that he uses more Latin words than any of the other

Gospels. "There are also more Latin phrases and idioms like centurio (15:39), quadrans (12:42), flagellare (15:15), speculator (6:27), census (12:14), sextarius (7:4), praetorium (15:6), than in the other Gospels."  
(Robertson)

- ii. When Bible translators go to a people who have never had the Scriptures in their own language, they usually begin by translating the Gospel of Mark. Mark is the most translated book in all the world. One reason is because it is the shortest Gospel, but the other reason is because this Gospel was written for people unfamiliar with first century Judaism. Mark wrote it for the Romans.

***Reflection:***

What type of a servant am I? Do I need the approval of others to keep serving? Do I compare myself with others?

***Personal application:***

Take time to re-assess the heart of a servant. I can be confident that God has me on his radar and will use me as he sees fit, just as he used Mark.

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, please use me today as your unique witness, telling my story, in my own words, with my own style and life experience for God's Kingdom.



**Thursday 4 January**

**Read Mark chapter 1**

- a. **The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God:** Every great story has a **beginning**, and Mark takes us to his **beginning of the gospel**. The ancient Greek word for **gospel** means "good news," so this book is *the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God*. It is the *good news* concerning Jesus.
- i. Every word in Mark's description of Jesus is important. First, this is the *good news* of **Jesus**, a genuine, historical person who walked this earth like other men. It is the *good news* of the **Christ** (which simply means "Messiah"), the promised, anointed Saviour of men. And it is the *good news* of **the Son of God**, and a **Son** in more than a sense that we think of all men coming from God. Jesus is the unique **Son of God**, who is also **God the Son**.
- ii. **Gospel:** Among the Romans it meant 'joyful tidings' and was associated with the cult of the emperor, whose birthday, attainment to majority and accession to power were celebrated as festival occasions for the whole world. The reports of such festivals were called 'evangels' in the inscriptions and papyri of the Imperial Age. A calendar inscription from about 9 B.C., found in Priene in Asia Minor, says of the emperor

Octavian (Augustus): 'the birthday of the god was for the world *the beginning of joyful tidings* which have been proclaimed on this account.'  
This inscription is remarkably similar to Mark's initial line.

***Reflection:***

How did the good news of Jesus initially impact my life?  
Does it still have an impact on the way I think and live?  
Have I moved away from my first love?

***Personal application:***

The message of Jesus coming into the world as promised Messiah and Saviour is a good news message. Today I am a bearer of good news.

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, help me to find opportunities today to tell someone the good news of Jesus, my Lord and Saviour in a joyful way.

**Friday 5 January**

**Read Mark chapter 1**

The first thing Mark will say about the ministry of John the Baptist is that it was prophesied in the Old Testament (Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3). Those passages predict this forerunner who would **prepare the way of the LORD**, this forerunner whom God would call **My messenger**.

- a. **My messenger** is important, because this is the first authentically prophetic voice to Israel (with the slight exceptions of Anna and Simeon in Luke 2) for 300 years. Some thought that God stopped sending prophets because He had nothing more to say, but John shows this wasn't the case at all.
  
- b. If we wondered what Mark meant when he called Jesus the **Son of God**, here he clarifies it. Mark says the ministry of John the Baptist was to **prepare the way of the LORD**, and he prepared the way of *Jesus*. In Mark's mind, Jesus is **LORD**.
  
- c. **Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight**: The passage Mark quotes from (Isaiah 40:3) has in mind building up a great road for the arrival of a majestic king. The idea is to fill in the holes, and knock down the hills that are in the way.

- i. The idea of preparing the way of the LORD is a word picture, because the real preparation must take place in our hearts. Building a road is very much like the preparation God must do in our hearts. They are both expensive and deal with many different problems and environments, and the work requires skilled and unskilled workers.
  
- d. Jesus was the coming Messiah and King, and John the Baptist was the one **crying in the wilderness**, and through his message of repentance, he worked to **prepare the way of the LORD**. We often fail to appreciate how important the *preparing* work of the LORD is. Any great work of God begins with *great preparation*. John wonderfully fulfilled this important ministry. "John was God's bulldozer to build that highway." (Steadman)

***Reflection:***

Am I willing to be the one who goes ahead to make preparations for another? Is my heart open to listen to the Holy Spirit's instructions?

***Personal application:***

Whatever God calls me to do is significant and I must do it with all my heart. I should not fall into the trap of comparing my service with another person's work.

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, help me to have an open and teachable heart.

**Saturday 6 January**

**Read Mark chapter 1**

**John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins:** This describes how John prepared the way. He came baptizing, that is offering a ceremonial washing that encouraged the confession of sin and action of baptism in water to demonstrate repentance.

- a. **Baptism** simply means to "immerse or overwhelm." John didn't sprinkle when he **came baptizing**. As was the custom in some other Jewish ceremonial washings, John completely immersed those he baptized. "Naturally, therefore, the baptism was not a mere sprinkling with water, but a bath in which his whole body was bathed." (Barclay)
- b. Baptism was practiced in the Jewish community already in the form of ceremonial immersions; but typically, it was only among Gentiles who wished to become Jews. For a Jew in John's day to submit to baptism was essentially to say, "I confess that I am as far away from God as a Gentile and I need to get right with Him." This was a real work of the Holy Spirit.
- c. John's baptism might have been related to the Jewish practice of baptizing Gentile converts, or to some of the ceremonial washings practiced by the

Jews of that day. Though it may have some links, at the same time it was *unique* - so unique that John simply became known as "the Baptizer." If there were a lot of people doing that, it wouldn't be a unique title.

- d. Is Christian baptism - the baptism we do today - just like John's? Christian baptism is like John's in the sense that it demonstrates repentance, but it is also more. It is being *baptized into Christ*, that is, into His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3).

***Reflection:***

Believers baptism in water is a step of obedience to demonstrate "an outward sign of an inward grace"; is this still real for me today? When I was baptised, I was identifying with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection. Does my conversation (inward and outward) line up with my new life in Christ?

***Personal application:***

I am a new creation and walk in the newness of life.  
Walk worthy.

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, help me to walk in obedience, agreeing with Your word that I am a new creation in Your Son.

## Monday 8 January

Read Mark chapter 1 (try using a different version)

### **Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem:**

John's ministry met with wonderful response. There were many people who recognized their sinfulness, their need to get ready for the Messiah, and were willing to *do* something about it.

- a. John's main message wasn't "You're a sinner, you need to repent." John's main message was "*The Messiah is coming.*" The call to repentance was the *response* to the news that the Messiah was coming.

(Mark 1:6-8) John the Baptist: the man and his message.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

- b. **Clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt:** In his personality and ministry, John the Baptist was patterned after the bold Elijah (2 Kings 1:8), who fearlessly called Israel to repentance.

- i. In the spirit of today's age, John's ministry would have been very different. He wouldn't start in the wilderness. He wouldn't have dressed in strange clothing. He wouldn't preach such a straightforward message. He would use marketing surveys and focus groups to hone his message and presentation. However, John wasn't motivated by the spirit of today's age, but by the Spirit of God.

***Reflection:***

Am I pointing people to Jesus or to their own bad habits? Am I fearless and bold when I speak about Jesus as Saviour? Am I influenced by the spirit of this age or the Holy Spirit?

***Personal application:***

Keep the message of Jesus' gift of forgiveness and new life clear and not clouded by arguments of lifestyle choices or philosophies of man.

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, use me as an instrument of the gospel today. Make me a pure channel of your grace and mercy.



**Tuesday 9 January**

**Read Mark chapter 1** (*try using a different version*)

**There comes One after me who is mightier than I:** The message of John the Baptist was simple. John preached Jesus, not himself. John pointed to Jesus, not to himself.

a. **Whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down**

**and loose:** This might sound like spiritual exaggeration on John's part - a "I'm not worthy to lick his boots" kind of thing. But John says this because in his day, the rabbis taught that a teacher might require just about anything of his followers, *except* to make them take off his sandals. That was going too far! But John says that he is not even worthy to do this for Jesus.

- i. Babylonian Talmud, *Ketuboth* 96a: "All services which a slave does for his master a pupil should do for his teacher, with the exception of undoing his shoes." (Cited in Lane)

b **He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit:** John recognized his baptism was only a *prelude* to what Jesus would bring. The Messiah would bring an immersion in the Holy Spirit that was greater than the immersion in water as a demonstration of repentance.

John's baptism could demonstrate repentance, but it could not truly cleanse one from sin, nor could it impart the Holy Spirit in the way Jesus could after His work on the cross was completed for us.

***Reflection:***

Was John's secluded lifestyle the reason he had such a deep understanding of the coming One? How often do I spend quality time in God's presence? Do I take note of what God says to me? Do I act on it?

***Personal application:***

Review (and write down) time spent alone with God. What was the last thing God spoke to me about personally? Have I acted on it?

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, help me to put You first in my day and throughout the day, please prompt me by Your Holy Spirit so that I can become more aware of Your presence with me.

## Wednesday 10 January

Mark 1:9-11 – The baptism of Jesus.

It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

- a. **Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan:** Why was Jesus baptized? It was not because He needed cleansing from sin, because Jesus was sinless, as John himself understood (Matthew 3:14). Instead, Jesus was baptized in keeping with His entire mission on earth: to identify with sinful man.
  - i. Jesus didn't *have* to be baptized. He also didn't *have* to die on a cross in our place. He did both things to express His solidarity with fallen man.
- b. **Immediately:** The ancient Greek word is *euthus*, and this is the first of more than 40 times this word is used in the Gospel of Mark.
- c. **You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased:** When this voice of God the Father spoke from heaven, everyone knew that Jesus was not just another man

being baptized. They knew Jesus was the perfect (**in whom I am well pleased**) Son of God, identifying with sinful man. By this, everyone knew that Jesus was different. Jesus was baptized to be identified with sinful man, but He was also baptized to be identified to sinful man.

***Reflection:***

If Jesus came to identify with my sinful condition to the point of dying on the cross, how willing am I to identify Him as my Lord and Saviour to my family, friends and work colleagues? The Father and the Holy Spirit both endorsed Jesus from heaven for my sake so that I can have confidence in Him.

***Personal application:***

Today I have confidence in Jesus and am willing to speak out loud and clear of His willingness to come as Saviour.

***Prayer Time:***

Lord, I am so grateful that You came to make a way for me to know the Father and the Holy Spirit. Help me to walk as You walked so I can know that I'm pleasing to God.



# TheGateChurch

Love God Love People Love Life

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