



THE BOOK OF MARK

– Small Group Study Guide –

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*Summit small groups exist to make disciples through Bible study,
community, and mission.*

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How to Use This Guide

I've accepted that there is a very strong chance that these next few hundred words will not be read by anyone. We view "user guides" like we view parking attendants - *I know how to park my own car, bub!* But think about it like this: at the Summit we always have a volunteer team in the parking lot, not because we assume you do not know how to park your car, but so that you have the best possible experience parking your car and that you see and sense the gospel before you even find your seat. I want you to have the best possible experience interacting with this resource and preparing for your small group meetings so that once you are there you will be able to share and receive the gospel in an incredible way.

Before we jump into how to get the most out of this guide, here are five statements that will set the stage for what we are doing:

1. This is a seven week study through the Gospel of Mark.
2. The purpose and goal of this study is to help the members of The Summit Church read and study the particular genre of the Bible called "Gospels."
 - a. Why is this important?
 - i. The New Testament makes up only about 25 percent of the Bible.
 - ii. However, the Gospels make up over 45 percent of the New Testament!
 - iii. If we are going to understand the New Testament, we will have to know how to read these four books called Gospels.
3. These studies are meant to be used in a Summit small group setting as a discussion guide. All Summit small groups will be using this guide over the same seven week period.

4. Small group leaders are encouraged to use the guide as a starting block for creating their individual small group environments. Some leaders will stick very closely to the guide; others may only use some of the guide.

5. This study of Mark will fall within the Summit's yearlong study of The Whole Story. These seven weeks will help our church go deeper into one Gospel while the weekend worship time will be covering a broad scope of teaching from all four Gospels. This was a purposeful decision meant to multiply our breadth and depth of understanding of the Gospels during this season.

That said, what do you need to know to get the most out of this short study?

No matter how your particular small group leader uses this guide in shaping your small group time, there are three essentials:

#1: Weekend Worship

At the Summit we say that the week is just as important as the weekend. We want our church to be equally as generous, loving, worshipful, and committed to King Jesus during the week as when we gather on the weekend. However, the weekend is our kick-off to each week. During the time we are studying the Gospel of Mark, the weekend messages will also be focused on the Gospels. The purpose of the Gospels is to tell the good news of who Jesus is and what he has done to save people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. It is crucial that the way we worship and respond to the teaching of God's Word on the weekend is brought into our time in community throughout the week.

#2: Individual Preparation

The most important thing that the people in your small group need from you is this: that you walk closely with God, study his Word, and come to small group ready to share how God is working in your life and how he can work in the lives of others. Another way to say this is: stuff yourself so full of worship, prayer, and the Bible and then come explode over the people in your small group! A great way to do that is by using this guide as a starting point for your daily time with God in preparation for your time with your community of believers, in your small group. Read the passages that go along with each study and think about some answers to the questions before getting to your group time.

#3: Small Group

We believe that discipleship happens in relationships. Therefore, every Summit small group is structured to be the ideal context for making disciples. This happens when people in community study the Bible and allow it to propel them into engaging the mission of the church.

Summit small groups are not just Bible studies. We do not want to be in the business of simply making smarter sinners. One of the primary benefits of studying and applying the Word of God together in community is that we allow ourselves to be exposed to one another and align our lives more with God's Word. Our awesome small group leaders want to lead our church in making disciples. I want all of us to be willing to follow their lead and see God do amazing things in the lives of the people of The Summit Church!

There is one more thing to help you get the most out of this study. Each Gospel has a specific audience and purpose in mind. It can be helpful to learn from all of them at once, as we will be doing during the weekend messages. However, it is also very beneficial to study each one as its own, self-contained unit. I encourage you during your small group time to just use the Gospel of Mark in answering each of the questions.

I hope this is a great study for you and your group. I can't wait to hear how it goes for you!

David Talbert
Small Groups Pastor

Introduction to Mark

As a church, we gather on the weekend and throughout the week to worship God, study the Bible, and live out the implications of the gospel. This year we have been going through the entire Bible, studying all different types of Scripture. Over the next seven weeks, we will be slowing down to focus on the Gospels, which are about Jesus' ministry, life, death, and resurrection. The Gospel writer Mark, along with the other Gospel writers, was eager to show how Jesus was the fulfillment of all the hopes, dreams, promises, and prophecies that came from God to the people of Israel.

There are four Gospels with one subject: **the good news about Jesus**. So you can imagine that many of the same stories come through in each Gospel. You will see familiar stories in each Gospel, but the way these stories are arranged and the major points of each Gospel are different. The different points are much more complementary than contradictory, but each Gospel writer has his own flavor. Over the next few weeks, you will get to know Jesus through the eyes of Mark. Here is what Mark specifically has to offer for your understanding of Jesus:

Themes

Mark presents Jesus as a man whose teaching and accomplishments will bring about a new era in human history. Jesus' initial message is, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15 ESV). Mark 1:1 calls this message the "gospel," or good news about Jesus Christ. What is it about Jesus that makes his ministry so important and history-changing? Mark demonstrates Jesus' identity and the authority he had to make some incredibly bold claims.

Mark uses several key phrases to describe Jesus, and each of their meanings is full of significance, both for the first readers—2,000 years ago in Israel—and for us today. Jesus is the "Son of David," the "Christ," the "Holy One of God," "Teacher," "King of the Jews," "Lord of the Sabbath," and so on. This plethora of powerful titles makes the book of Mark feel like a coronation ceremony for Jesus. For our study, the most important of these titles are:

Son of God [1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 15:39]: this is the phrase that Mark uses to begin and end the book. He calls Jesus the Son of God in verse 1 of the whole book. At the end, a Roman centurion, of all people, watches him die on the cross and declares Jesus to be the “son of God.” In between, it is the demons who attribute this title to Jesus.

Son of Man [2:10, 28; 8:31, 38; 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33, 45; 13:26; 14:21, 41, 62; 15:39]: this odd sounding title is a technical term from the Old Testament. Often, prophets used it to refer to themselves (Jeremiah and Ezekiel). But Jesus has one particular use from Daniel 7:13 in mind, which referred to the Messiah (or Christ). This particular “Son of Man” gets all authority to rule God’s kingdom from God himself, in God’s throne room.

Mark uses this phrase 14 times to describe Jesus (if you include 15:39), often in some very glorious, Daniel-7-like moments (9:9; 13:26; 14:62). However, eight times Jesus uses the phrase to prophesy about his own death and suffering (chapters 8, 9, 10, 14). Mark’s point: Jesus reveals that the glorious king from Daniel 7 will also be the suffering servant who will die on a cross for many.

Christ [1:1; 8:29; 9:41; 12:35; 14:61, 62; 15:32]: This is the same word as “Messiah.” This term referred to the expectation that a “son of David” would restore the kingdom of Israel and bring ultimate peace to the world. The climactic moment of Mark, in 8:29, is when Peter declares that Jesus is, in fact, the Christ. All of Jesus’ works in chapters 1–8 lead up to that conclusion, and everything from 9–16 clarify for the reader that the Christ had to die to fulfill his mission.

In his book, Mark is not simply saying that someone with authority should bestow these titles on Jesus based on his worthiness. Mark’s intent is to tell us something much greater: the person with the authority to give any title at all is Jesus himself. Throughout Mark, you will see that Jesus had the authority to teach God’s word, forgive sins, drive out demons, give the disciples the power to heal, bring dead people back to life, and represent God to the world.

As you read Mark, remember these two key words—authority and identity.

Structure

The structure of Mark is easy to see through its geography and subject matter. Mark has a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end that serve as a rising, climax, and falling plot structure. Here's how it breaks down:

| | 1:1-8:26 | 8:27-10:52 | 11:1-16:8 |
|----------------|---|--|---|
| Plot Structure | Rising Action | Climactic Moment: Peter declares Jesus is the Christ | Resolution: Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and the empty tomb |
| Geography | Ministry in Galilee and surrounding regions | Jesus heading toward Jerusalem | Jesus enters Jerusalem and will die there |
| Subject Matter | Learn about Jesus' identity, teaching, and accomplishments | Transfiguration, in which disciples see Jesus' glory | Jesus teaches often about his own death |

Mark 1–8 teaches us about Jesus' authority and the glorious aspects of his identity. But as soon as his disciples figure out his true identity, he must clarify his mission to them. At first, Peter and the other disciples have an incorrect view of what the Messiah should do. Instead, Jesus teaches them the way of the cross—and he walks that road to his own death.

*** Note that we are going to function as though Mark 16:8 is the end of the book. Almost all modern Bibles, especially study Bibles, have a note for this section. Some of the earliest manuscripts of the Bible do not include Mark 16:9–20. When the disciples discover the empty tomb it is the last piece of the puzzle that they needed to understand who Jesus is. Like in Mark 4:35–41, the empty tomb made them more afraid to have been in Jesus' presence as they realize his true power and identity. The disciples' response to the empty tomb seems to be the final, purposeful punch the author uses to show that this man is no mere magician. He is God.*

Literary Devices

Mark demonstrates a few literary strategies that make the book fun to study. First, he is a master at **grouping** events and teaching together to make a theological point. The most famous version of this comes in chapter 8, where Jesus heals a man of blindness, but only partially

at first. This is right in between where Jesus is explaining who he is to his disciples. They see that Jesus is the Christ (partial healing), but they do not see the full picture (still some blindness). Several of the studies will point out where these miracles and teachings complement each other for a specific reason (see Mark 2, 4, and 8).

Second, Mark traces several sets of storylines at the same time. These storylines involve how different groups of people **respond and react** to Jesus. Here are those groups and their stories:

- Religious Leaders: the Pharisees and scribes consistently oppose Jesus, and are complicit in his death.
- Disciples: they are generally faithful to Jesus but do not see the full picture until the very end.
- Crowds: they are pro-Jesus from the very first miracles, declare his praises in a triumphant moment when he enters Jerusalem (Mark 11), only to cry for his crucifixion a week later.
- Faithful People: there are many individuals who respond to Jesus with exemplary faith.
- Deserters: there are other individuals who walk away from Jesus at key moments. Interestingly, the disciples exhibit some of this behavior as well.

Third, Mark uses tremendous amounts of **irony** throughout his book. For example, at the moment of Jesus' death, who do we find affirming Mark's claim that Jesus is the Son of God? The demons and one of the very Roman soldiers who crucified him! Also, Jesus' own disciples rarely act with exemplary faith. That is reserved mostly for various individuals who did not have the advantages and the private lessons that the disciples had. Furthermore, the title "King of the Jews" comes up most often at the end, where the people are calling for Jesus' crucifixion. His mockers ironically recognize his title, but give no faith that he is really the one that can save them. They cry, "Let him save himself," but he does not save himself so that he can finish the work of saving others.

As you read through Mark, look for these three strategies: 1) different people's reactions to Jesus throughout the book, 2) groupings of miracles and teachings that belong together, and 3) irony.

Week 1

Mark 2:1-3:6

Mark's Gospel opens with the boldest claim of any book ever written. He declares in verse 1 that Jesus is "the Son of God" and goes on to tell us Jesus' primary message: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). For Jews, waiting for the kingdom of God represented the culmination of their entire history, all their hopes, and all their dreams—both individually and as a nation. For many people of many religions, the search for good news from God was also of utmost importance. Jesus inspires all people to ask these deep questions and find their answers.

We, however, begin our study of the Gospel of Mark in chapter 2. Mark begins by showing why Jesus has the **authority** to introduce such profound statements. Here's how he does this:

- 2:1–11, Jesus forgives sins. People doubt if he has the divine authority to do this, so he proves that he has that authority by healing a paralytic.
- 2:13–17, Jesus commands men to obey him. Here he claims that he is the great physician, capable of bringing spiritual healing and reconciling the worst, most outcast sinners to the most Holy God. During this meal he calls one of these "sinners" to be his disciple!
- 2:18–22, Jesus calls himself the "bridegroom." He claims that his presence among his disciples is cause for celebration. Here he is implying that his presence signals the restoration and renewal that the Jews were waiting for.
- 2:23–3:6, Jesus claims to be Lord of the Sabbath. That he can heal and bring life on the Sabbath indicates that he is God in the flesh. He also gives authoritative teaching on what can happen on the Sabbath, one of the most sacred Jewish observances.

Finally, Jesus declares that he is the "Son of Man" (Mark 2:28). The phrase "Son of Man" has a bit of a double meaning. Obviously, any man born of a human, like Jesus was, is a "son of

man.” However, Jesus uses the phrase “Son of Man” in a very specific way, harkening back to Daniel 7:13–14, where God gives over authority and power to one like a “son of man,” an extremely exalted way of referring to himself. This name was Jesus’ favorite self-designation because it gave both the exalted and humbled view of the Savior of the entire world. The “Son of Man” is the one with the authority over Sabbath laws. As we will see in the rest of Mark, the kingdom of God won’t be exactly what anyone was expecting, but Mark 2 establishes that it comes through the preaching, teaching, and actions of Jesus the Son of God, the one with the authority to bring it about.

Bible Study Questions

1. Mark 2 contains four events. In each event Jesus is accused of some wrong, but in turn demonstrates his authority to the audience observing him. Look at each of the four sections: what is Jesus accused of, and what is the main point that Mark is trying to convey in each?

2. Synthesizing these four events together, what do we see are common themes of Jesus’ ministry?

3. As mentioned in the introduction, the Gospel of Mark pairs teaching and miracles together to highlight important points about who Jesus is. Where and how does the author use that technique in Mark 2:1–3:6?

4. What kind of reactions does Jesus evoke with his words and his actions?

5. What does it mean that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath?

Group Application Questions

6. Answer Jesus' question in verse 9 for yourself. What is easier for you to believe: "Your sins are forgiven," or "You are healed from paralysis"? Why?

7. In Mark 8:21–22, Jesus teaches about old and new wineskins to show that people need to be fundamentally changed in order to be in right relationship with him. Have your group share ways in which God has changed their life through salvation, making them like new wineskins.

8. Jesus' power and authority demand a response, but sometimes it is difficult for us to act out of faith instead of fear or pride. Based on your study of this chapter, share an area of your life where you struggle to trust Jesus' power and authority.

Prayer

Read Isaiah 58.

- As a group, have someone pray through these points for you:
- God, you alone deserve our praise.
- We have failed to worship you the way you want us to.
- Purify our hearts and restore us into your fellowship.
- Thank you for the ways that Jesus has modeled holiness for us.
- Give us opportunities to spread the gospel in our community.

Week 2

Mark 4

At first glance, chapter four can seem like a strange collection of unrelated stories. On closer inspection, however, we see that Mark placed these stories next to each other to reveal something about Jesus and the kingdom of God to the reader in a very specific way. Why does he start with parables and then tell a story? Why do we get an explanation of the first parable, but not the others? Mark designed this passage to communicate something important for us to grasp about who Jesus has revealed himself to be.

There are several themes that emerge and connect throughout this chapter. Jesus speaks to the crowd and they do not understand, but Jesus reveals his meaning to the disciples. Jesus' parables show that the Word of God is what causes any real effect in this world. God's Word is the light so we do not cover it. God's Word is the seed that the farmer sows in faith, but only God causes change and growth. Most importantly, after we learn about God's Word from these parables, we see it come to life in the form of Jesus.

The disciples heard the spiritual lessons, but were unprepared for the true power Jesus showed when even the wind and the waves "heard and obeyed him" (Mark 4:41). This interaction with the disciples is often misconstrued as Jesus sweetly calming the storm to ease our fears, but notice that the disciples were even more afraid after Jesus revealed his true power and rebuked nature itself. The specific mention of the disciples' fear is no accident here. In chapter 16, when Jesus rises from the dead, the true depth of his power and glory are revealed, yet those who first realize this are not overjoyed or comforted; they are greatly afraid (Mark 16:8).

It is one thing to hear the words of Jesus, but it is another to see their power in action because of who he is and the authority he has. Jesus revealed the nature of his Word and authority through parables. Jesus demonstrated the authority of his Word by rebuking the wind and the waves. Jesus broke the authority of sin and death by rising from the grave. His authority is powerful and terrifying, but this sacrifice now gives us the opportunity to hear and obey.

This chapter of Mark teaches us that the Word of the Lord is powerful and has great conse-

quences. Our hope is in hearing and obeying the Word of the Lord. Most importantly, this chapter shows us that Jesus himself is the Word of the Lord and both Scripture and creation bear witness to this. We see throughout Mark that Jesus reveals who he is by displaying the authority he has. This is why the author weaves together parables about hearing and obeying, beside stories of Jesus speaking with authority.

Bible Study Questions

1. What similarities do you see between the four parables? What differences?
2. Using Jesus' explanation of the Parable of the Sower (vv. 14–20), what is the parable about? What is its primary purpose and what response should we have to it?
3. Compare verses 10–12 and verses 33–34. Did Jesus speak in parables so that people could understand or so that they could not understand? What prevents people from understanding?
4. What do we learn about the kingdom of God from the parables in verses 26–32?

5. Jesus asks the disciples in verse 40, “Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?” How does knowing about God’s kingdom also teach us about his love and power in the lives of believers?

Group Application Questions

6. What is the difference between just hearing the Word and hearing and obeying the Word? Why does the author make this distinction?

7. What are areas in your life where you may have heard the Word of the Lord but are not obeying? How does recognizing Jesus’ authority change your desire to follow him?

8. How do these parables help us when we feel pressure and temptation to give up proclaiming the gospel?

Prayer

Have someone read Colossians 1:15–23.

- Have a different person pray through these points:
- Praise Jesus because of who he is and the power that he wields.
- Thank Jesus for working his power in ways that you've seen in your life.
- Praise Jesus for the reconciliation that he brings to us and to the world.
- Ask for a heart that will see Jesus and understand who he is in his full glory.
- Ask for the ability to live out his commands and live a holy life to honor him.

Week 3

Mark 5:21-43

The event recounted in Mark 5:21–43 grows out of this significant question posed at the end of chapter four: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him” (Mark 4:41)?

This passage tells two intertwined stories of healing and redemption. This scene opens with a desperate man’s plea. “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so she may be made well and live” (Mark 5:23). On his way to heal the little girl, however, Jesus is interrupted by another woman in need. This woman reaches out and touches his garment in faith that she would be made well.

In addition to continuing to demonstrate Jesus’ ultimate authority as King, Mark reveals two things in this passage about the type of king Jesus would prove himself to be:

1. Jesus is an all-powerful king. Neither the unclean woman nor Jairus’ daughter could be made well by human power (Mark 5:26, 35). It would take supernatural power to heal them.
2. Jesus is a compassionate king. In the midst of the crowds, Jesus stops to care for the “least of these.”

This passage also shows us that, through our faith in Jesus, each one of us has the status of a son or daughter of the King. The little girl that Jesus raises from the dead has a father who care deeply for her. The woman, on the other hand, is a social outcast. She has no one to call her “daughter.” Physicians cannot heal her, she has spent all of her money on medical care, and she is without hope. But in the midst of the crowd, one man takes notice of her when she reaches out to touch the fringe of his garment. “Daughter,” he says. “Your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed” (Mark 5:34).

This was likely the first time she had been called “daughter” in a very long time. She had been ill for 12 years.

It's no coincidence that Jairus' daughter was 12 years old. For as long as Jairus' daughter had a daddy who loved her, the woman was an outcast. For Jairus, something was lost and restored—his daughter. For the woman, something was gained—a Father.

This passage teaches us that **Jesus is the *powerful and compassionate* King who we can boldly approach in our times of need.**

Bible Study Questions

1. List the miracles that Jesus performs in this passage. Choose one person in your group to summarize each event.

2. Who is present to witness each miracle? How does each person or group respond?

3. "Faith" is an action word. How does Jairus act on his faith in this story? How does the woman act on her faith?

4. Mark uses the word "daughter" to describe both the young girl who was brought up in a stable home with believing parents (v. 23) and the unclean woman who was an outcast from society (v. 34). What does this teach you about who will be welcome in Jesus' kingdom?

5. What is the difference between the way that the crowd touched Jesus and the way that the unclean woman touched Jesus?

Group Application Questions

6. In this story Mark contrasts fear and faith. How have you personally experienced fear and faith in your life?

7. This passage shows us that Jesus responds to and rewards bold (but not necessarily perfect) faith. Where in your life do you need to ask Jesus boldly for grace and healing?

8. Jairus asks Jesus to act on behalf of his daughter. Who in your life needs to experience the power and compassion of Jesus through your bold faith? Share what your faith and actions may need to look like in your particular situation.

Prayer

Read Galatians 6:2 and break up into groups of three or four.

Share your personal answer from question six and pray for one another. Take this opportunity to bear one another's burdens through prayer this week.

Week 4

Mark 8:22-38

This week's study is the major hinge that connects the first half of the Gospel of Mark with the second half (see Mark's outline in the Introduction). During our first three studies we have looked at different ways in which Jesus was shown and declared to be the Messiah and King that was promised. This week the disciples declare that Jesus is the Messiah, but they will still fail to see the implications of what it means to be the Savior of the world.

After Peter proclaims that Jesus is Lord (in this passage), Mark makes a specific change. Before this event the story revolved around Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God and showing that he has the power and authority to be the Christ. After this event Mark shows that Jesus' ministry changes. Other than healing two blind men (8:22–26; 10:46–52) and casting out an unclean spirit (9:14–29), Jesus performs no more miracles as he moves toward Jerusalem. His teaching ceases to be primarily directed toward crowds and becomes almost exclusively targeted at the disciples. After Peter's confession of Jesus' identity as the Christ, Jesus' teaching primarily focuses on what the messianic mission is and what it means for those who follow him.

In this passage, the primary element of Jesus' teaching is the suffering and death of the Messiah: "The Son of Man must suffer many things and ... be killed" (Mark 8:31). For Mark, and for us, the crucifixion of Jesus is the means by which Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many.

Bible Study Questions

1. How does this passage describe what kind of Messiah Jesus would be?

2. What evidence do we have in this passage that the disciples do not see clearly what kind of a Messiah Jesus is?

3. In verse 31 the word “must” takes control of the sentence. What does verse 31 tell us about Jesus’ purpose for coming to earth?

4. Why does Jesus warn the disciples and others throughout the Gospel not to tell people about him?

5. This passage begins with a blind man who is healed in multiple stages. What parallels does Mark want us to see between the blind man at Bethsaida and the disciples?

Group Application Questions

6. We may be tempted to only tell part of Jesus’ story when we try to convince our friends that they should trust in Jesus. Why is it important that we give an accurate portrayal of Christ’s character and works when we share the gospel?

7. What does it mean for us to follow a servant king?

8. How would you answer a child who asked, “Why does it say Jesus ‘must’ suffer, die, and rise again?” How would you answer a Muslim friend asking the same question?

Prayer

Look back at Mark 8:35–38. Break into groups of 2–4 and take turns making each verse into a prayer to God.

Week 5

Mark 10:17-52

The gospel message in this passage is sandwiched between two groups of people who respond poorly to Jesus' message, and then finishes up with an unexpected story of one who responds well. Here Mark is purposefully contrasting what faith in the gospel message *should not* look like with what it *should* look like.

First, we see the rich young ruler walk away from Christ, thinking his riches and good works are a better bet for eternal happiness. This man misses the mark of what true faith in the gospel should look like because of his money-idol and trust in his own good works.

Then, for the *third* time, Jesus reminds the disciples of what the gospel actually is: his life, death, and resurrection (10:32–34). As they walk toward Jerusalem—toward the place of his crucifixion—Jesus foretells the gruesome reality of the cross one last time before Calvary.

One might think that the disciples would finally understand Jesus' point. In his death, the cosmic payment for sin would be satisfied and in the resurrection, the curse of death would be defeated once and for all. It would be bloody, but it would be necessary. The “hundredfold” blessings in the gospel (10:30) must be purchased through suffering first. Death is required for life to spring forth. The way of discipleship is hard, but worth it.

Yet this is not where we find the mindset of the disciples. They are yet again squabbling among themselves, missing the point entirely. They act much like the lost rich young ruler in their response to Jesus' gospel message. Imagine. Jesus headed soberly to his divine plummet to be treated like the scum of the earth, and the disciples walk beside him, *again* bickering over who will be treated with positions of high authority! Instead of money, their idol was prestige. Their response shows us that both the lost *and* the found can respond without faith to Jesus.

Against the dark backdrop of the disciples' faithless quarrels about privilege, Mark offers a shining example of what a faithful response to Jesus actually looks like through the story of Bartimaeus, a blind beggar (10:46–52). Instead seeking money or prestige, he simply asks for

mercy in his fallen state, making Jesus stop dead in his tracks and heal him.

At the end of this section, Mark answers our question: *which character shows us the faithful response to Jesus?* Instead of a rich person or even a disciple, a blind beggar is our answer—one who humbly calls out for mercy instead of idolatry or personal gain. As odd as it sounds, this part of Jesus' journey should give us great hope: we too, are disciples who fail to exercise humble faith. We too, though having regular access to his incredible teaching, often miss what he's trying to show us! However, as we will see in the coming chapters, Jesus stays faithful to even the most dense of disciples and ultimately, as he foretold, dies for their (and our!) failure to follow him properly.

Bible Study Questions

1. Compare and contrast the rich man, James and John, and Bartimaeus. How do they approach Jesus, and what requests do they make?

2. How does Jesus expose the rich man's idol (v. 21)? How does this inform the way we are to expose the idols of others and ourselves?

3. What does Jesus promise us if we follow him in true faith (vv. 29–30)?

4. Why were those following Jesus amazed and afraid in verses 32–34?

5. What does Jesus mean in verse 39 when he tells the disciples, “The cup that I drink you will drink”?

Group Application Questions

6. When Jesus says, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God” (v. 27), to what is he referring? How should this shape the way we share the gospel?

7. In verses 49–50 we see Bartimaeus’ response to being healed by Jesus. Share a time in your life when God led you to respond to him in this way through an answered request.

8. Jesus responds to James and John’s request by saying, “The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (10:45). How does this affect the way you pray and make requests to God?

Prayer

This text shows us that Jesus responds to desperation and faith, not entitlement and good works.

Break up into groups of two or three and share some of your recent prayers. List out the areas you feel entitled to things from God—whether position, prestige, or possessions.

In your group of two to three, repent and pray for a heart that desires God’s mercy over your life. List out some broken areas in your life that desperately need God’s compassion and grace, and take the next few minutes to cry out for God’s mercy in those areas.

Week 6

Mark 14

In Mark 14, we view scenes of Jesus' life leading up to his formal trial, execution, and resurrection. Most of the groups we have seen thus far in the Gospel of Mark (the crowds, the faithful, the disciples, the religious leaders, and the faithless) are given an opportunity to respond to who Jesus is one more time before Jesus is delivered over to Pilate in chapter 15. Throughout these events, Jesus is willingly going toward the cross to rescue his people. Jesus is in control and continues to show that his death is not a catastrophe but part of God's plan to save people from every different crowd.

We begin with a woman anointing Jesus with a very expensive ointment. The disciples and other dinner guests immediately view this extravagant gift to be a waste. Jesus corrects them, but in a very specific way. He does not emphasize his worth or suggest that his standing as God makes the gift appropriate—even though he could. Rather, he says that this gift is appropriate because of its function: “She has anointed my body beforehand for burial” (Mark 14:8). This woman's gift of love toward Jesus is a preparation for how God will demonstrate his love for all humanity by sending Jesus to the cross. No one present seems to understand the importance of this gift and this event seems to precipitate a further wrong response to Jesus—Judas' subsequent betrayal.

In verses 12 through 25 we observe the last Passover Jesus celebrated with his disciples and the institution of the Lord's Supper. For the disciples then and the church now, this ordinance helps believers understand and remember what Jesus did on the cross. Though this supper was a symbol of what would happen, Jesus' actual death was not a symbol. It was the substance. Jesus' body was actually broken because of the sins of humanity and his blood does cover all those who believe in him.

As we saw the emphasis in Mark 1–8 to be Jesus establishing his authority, a major theme of Mark 14 is his display of that authority on the way to the cross. Jesus was in control at every step leading to his death. The chief priests were specifically trying to wait until after the Passover to arrest and secretly kill Jesus, but that was not God's plan. Instead, Jesus was crucified publicly, according to his plan, with multitudes of extra people on hand for the festival, *during*

the Passover celebration. How these different groups of people respond to Jesus immediately before he goes to the cross provides an excellent lesson for what true faith should look like in us.

Bible Study Questions

1. Jesus' control over the events leading to his death are a major theme in Mark 14. List all the ways that Jesus shows his authority in this chapter.

2. How do those present in verses 3–9 respond to Jesus' anointing? How did their response compare to the woman who anoints Jesus?

3. As a group, describe the events and emotions of Jesus' time in Gethsemane, using the words found in Mark 14.

4. Peter insists that he would never disown Christ, yet within six hours of that statement he does so three times. What benefit is there in knowing that we, like Peter, are vulnerable and prone to failure?

5. Language of “breaking” is used twice in Mark 14. First, the woman breaks and pours out the perfume to prepare Jesus for his death. Second, Jesus illustrates through the Passover meal how his body would be broken and poured out for many to be saved. Some view this breaking as a waste. Some view this as a beautiful thing. Which view do you take? How does your view impact your faith?

Group Application Questions

6. Jesus’ arrest caused all the disciples to flee. What in your life most tests your loyalty to Christ? Be specific.

7. What role does accountability play in your ability to remain loyal to Christ? In what specific situations do you find it more or less difficult?

8. When we are broken and poured out for others, people around us (parents, professors, friends, family) might say we have wasted our potential. Do you ever succumb to the temptation to see your life lived for the gospel as a waste? What are some things you are doing or thinking of doing that would fall into this category?

Prayer

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–7.

Have someone pray for your group:

- Praise God that he is the Father of mercy and the God of all comfort.
- Confess some ways that your group is prone to be selfish during affliction instead of caring for one another.
- Thank God for a specific way he has comforted you through another believer in your group.
- Ask God to help you love one another well according to the way God has loved us in Jesus.

Week 7

Mark 15:1-16:8

We have come to the final section of our study in Mark. The Gospel writer, in the story of Jesus' "Passion," will wrap up a few significant storylines that we've been tracing throughout the book. Particularly, we see how the different groups—the crowds, the disciples, the authorities, the scribes and Pharisees, the deserters, and the true believers—all respond to Jesus at the end of his life. Chapter 14 highlighted how Jesus' disciples failed in the final hours, so take note of who is standing with Jesus at the very end.

Chapter 15 begins with the heartbreaking story of a man who is convinced that Jesus is innocent, and yet he is complicit in Jesus' death. Pilate sees through the false testimony of the Jewish religious leaders and the crowd's anger, but still delivers Jesus over for crucifixion.

Later, in verses 16–32, the Roman soldiers and religious leaders mock Jesus. The chief priests use pointed and sharp words to deride Jesus in verses 29–32. Their words, however, will become ironic by the end of the story. By letting himself be killed, Jesus will save many. He will be destroyed, but after three days God will rebuild the temple that is Jesus' body. People will see this, and they will believe in Jesus and tell the world what they have seen.

The end of chapter 15 shows how a few faithful people responded to Jesus. One centurion believes after witnessing Jesus' powerful death. Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus while Mary and other women follow him to the end. In chapter 16, these faithful women get the privilege of being the first to witness the greatest moment in human history. Jesus is risen! The women are amazed and afraid, but their fear will soon turn to joy.

Bible Study Questions

1. What surprises you about this passage? Why?

2. How do the religious leaders respond to Jesus in this passage? How has their relationship with Jesus progressed throughout Mark?

3. Who, if anyone, is faithful to Jesus in this story? What did these people do to show their faithfulness?

4. Look at verse 31. The religious leaders say that Jesus saved others, but he cannot save himself. What is the ironic truth in this statement?

5. How does each group respond to Jesus change after the resurrection? Are these responses different than before?

Group Application Questions

6. In your own words, explain why the mocking words of verses 29–32 end up being ironic.

7. During our study through Mark we have looked at how several different groups and individuals respond to Jesus. Who in Mark do you most closely identify with in the way they respond to Jesus?

8. What has most impacted your faith during this study of Mark? Why?

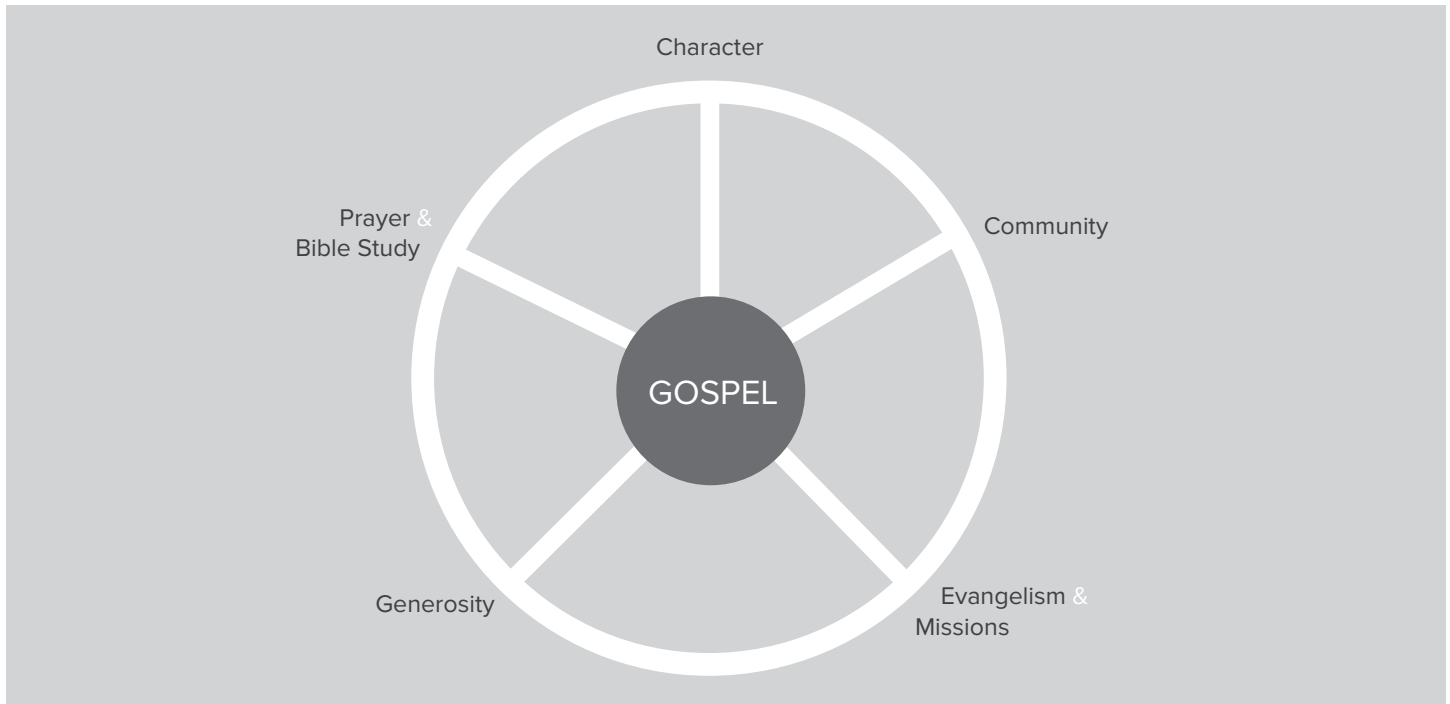
Prayer

Have someone read 2 Corinthians 5:11–21.

Have someone else in the group pray through the following points:

- Thank Jesus for dying on a cross for you.
- Thank God for providing a way of reconciliation, so that you and he could talk to each other and you could know him.
- Ask for the perspective to see others as new creations in Christ.
- Tell God why you respect and honor him.

The Gospel Wheel



The Gospel Wheel is a tool we at the Summit use to help gauge our growth as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Center: A Gospel-Centered Life

We want everyone to be changed by the power of the gospel. This means taking ourselves off the throne of our lives and putting God on the throne. When the gospel is the center of one's life, it redefines everything about that person, including the trajectory of his or her career, family, and future.

The Spokes: Fruit of the Gospel

The gospel takes dead people and makes them alive—and that is no small change! When the gospel becomes the center of one's life, it starts to work its way from the inside out. These five spokes represent five key areas that one can assess if and how the gospel is advancing in one's life.

A Warning: Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

The gospel is the center of the wheel, not the spokes. Although one can measure his or her growth in the gospel by assessing these five spokes, the goal is to grow deeper in the gospel, not to master a spoke.

The Goal: Gospel-Motivated Transformation

A wheel works best when it's full and balanced. Growing in just two or three spokes does not improve a wheel; it actually makes it worse. In the same way, gospel-centered growth in all of these areas puts God's glory on display in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ.

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Where To From Here?

You made it! Or you skipped ahead to read the last page. We hope that you have grown in your love for God, his Word, and his people over these last seven weeks. You might be asking yourself, “What’s next?”

Well, if you are new to this whole small group thing, I’ve got great news. Summit small groups meet all year long. Keep showing up—same time, same place next week—and you will continue to study through the Bible with these same people you have grown to know and love.

I’m going to borrow from a different gospel than the one we just studied, but you’ll see why. At the end of the Gospel of Matthew Jesus goes and meets his disciples in Galilee after he rises from the dead—just like the last few verses of Mark said he would. There Jesus gives them this command:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:18–20

Take what you have learned from this study with your small group and make disciples of all nations. Help people take the first step as a disciple—believer’s baptism. Teach (and keep learning yourself) to obey all that Jesus commanded. And never, ever forget that he is with you always!

David Talbert
Small Groups Pastor

