



# THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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# Welcome!

*Welcome to this term's look at Mark's Gospel\*. We're going to be exploring this Gospel at a fast pace but at the end of six weeks you will have heard the whole thing! This may be the first time that you have heard a whole story of Jesus's life. Because we are going to be moving so fast, you may be left with many questions, impressions or stories you might want to go back to, and that's ok! We hope that this will be the beginning of a lifelong habit of reading the Gospels and looking at the life of Jesus. You may be very familiar with the life of Jesus but have never focussed on a single Gospel before. You might like to take this chance to ask yourself why Mark writes the way he does. What does he include? What does he leave out? You may not have worked through a book of the bible so fast before. This practice can give us new insights that we may not have gained looking at smaller chunks at a time.*

*Originally, most books of the bible were written to be read aloud to an audience. Often books and letters were read in one sitting. The audience was able to see patterns and links of ideas more easily. This is our hope for our study of Mark. We will fly through quickly and get the big picture, the big impressions. As always, seek out one of the leaders if you have pressing questions that are not addressed in the group discussions. Or have a look at the resources and glossary page at the back of this booklet for places to dig deeper.*

*It's our hope and prayer that you will be truly blessed during this study as we explore together and try to answer the key question of Mark's Gospel, "Who is this Jesus?"*

*PS. Words marked with \* can be found in the glossary at the back of this booklet with some helpful definitions*

**Ask**

**Before you start you may want to reflect on some of these questions:**

What is your experience of reading a Gospel\* or stories about Jesus?

Is there a story about Jesus that stands out for you?

Have you ever heard a story about Jesus that has left you confused?

**Dig  
Deeper**

What was life like at the time Jesus lived?

**Share**

Don't keep what you learn to yourself!  
Share your findings with someone after church or at your midweek catch ups.

## Week 1

# Jesus is Healer

*There are four Gospels\* in the Bible: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each has a different focus and style. Mark's writing style is dramatic and fast paced. It's almost like Mark is writing an identity mystery: Who is this Jesus? Mark lets us in on who he thinks Jesus is at the beginning. But most people we meet in the story, including the disciples, are clueless. Slowly they discover the truth, but it's different to what they were expecting. In the end, the audience is left to decide if they agree with Mark or not, and how they will respond.*

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*Mark's story begins not with a baby in a manger, but a man in the wilderness. Jesus is fully grown and about to start his ministry. Jesus' baptism gives the audience a clue as to who he is, a voice from heaven declares him to be God's son. But those around Jesus are not able to see who he is, they are blinded by mystery. Jesus speaks with authority, performs miracles and cures illness. Who is this Jesus? The demons know, but they are silenced. Why?*

*Jesus draws people to him. Disciples and followers gather around him. Soon there are great crowds flocking to him. He also draws unwanted attention from religious authorities\*. Is he possessed? The authorities think so. Is he deluded? His family think so. But Jesus continues to draw people to him.*

**Watch**

**The Gospel of Mark DVD section 1 - Mark chapters 1-3.**  
Duration: 21min 27sec

**Ask**

What stood out for you the most?

The summary of Jesus's message can be found in Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!". Is this a message for us today and if so, what does it mean?

What does Jesus's ability and willingness to heal tell us?

Why do you think the religious authorities were offended by Jesus?

What questions are you left with that you hope might get answered in the course of this study?

**Dig  
Deeper**

Read the start of another Gospel;  
Matthew, Luke or John.  
Compare and consider the difference to Mark.

## Week 2

# Jesus is Master of Wisdom and Nature

*Jesus continues his ministry by teaching the crowds and the disciples\*. But his method of teaching is not always straightforward. Jesus teaches using parables\*. Why?*

*But if that's not mysterious enough, we find next that Jesus even has command over wind and waves. Nature itself obeys him. The disciples ask themselves, Who is this?*

*Next we find Jesus outside Jewish\* territory. He heals a man possessed by demons. This demonstration of power scares the locals, but the man is overjoyed and wants to join the disciples. For the first time, Jesus urges the man to stay with his people and tell them all about what God has done for him. Jesus allows his identity to be revealed to 'outsiders' but guards it with his own people. Why?*

*Mark shows us that Jesus is master over nature and demons. He then shows us that Jesus is master over death itself. Jesus raises a young girl from the dead, but returns to keeping his identity secret. He asks her family to tell no one. Why?*

Watch

**The Gospel of Mark DVD section 2 - Mark chapters 4-5.**  
Duration: 13min 29sec

Ask

What part of this section did you like the most?

Why do you think Jesus use parables and not plain teaching?

From the parables, what is your understanding of the 'Kingdom of God'?

What does it mean for you to be a part of God's Kingdom?

What does Jesus's power over nature and death mean for us?

Dig  
Deeper

Watch The Bible Project theme video titled  
**The Gospel of the Kingdom** on YouTube at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmFPS0f-kzs>

Or find it on The Bible Project site at [thebibleproject.com](http://thebibleproject.com)

## Week 3

# Jesus is Messiah\*

*Wild speculations are beginning to circulate as to who Jesus is. Herod\* thinks Jesus is John the Baptist\* back from the dead, others think he is a prophet\*.*

*Twice Jesus miraculously feed large crowds of people, but the disciples\* still don't get it. This is where Mark does something really interesting in his story. Jesus heals a blind man at Bethsaida but the man is only able to see clearly after Jesus' second laying on of hands. Why would Jesus, who has command over death itself, not heal the man fully the first time? Mark uses this story as a clue to what is going on with the disciples. They are blind, they are not able to see who Jesus truly is. Immediately after this story Jesus asks 'Who do you say I am?'. Peter is able to answer, but only half correctly. He is like the blind man able to see shadows but not clearly.*

*Peter's confession is the dramatic midpoint of Mark's Gospel, but the tension is still building. The question of who is this Jesus? has been answered, but what that looks like has not.*

**Watch**

**The Gospel of Mark DVD section 3 - Mark chapters 6-8.**  
Duration: 22min

**Ask**

What part of the disciples behaviour can you relate to?

What moment in the story spoke to you the most?

How do you feel about Jesus's words that 'whoever wants to save their life will lose it' (Mark 8:35)? How can we apply this to ourselves today?

The disciples miss the point of the feeding miracles. What do you think it was that they missed?

Jesus's says that it is what comes out of a person's heart that makes them unclean. How can we make our heart clean?

**Dig  
Deeper**

Read Psalm 72. This Psalm is known as a Messianic Psalm. It was likely used when Solomon was inaugurated as King of Israel. But no human king can live up to this Psalm. It points to a greater King. What does this Psalm teach about life under this King?

## Week 4

# Jesus is Son of Man

*We now move to the second part of Mark's Gospel which answers 'what type of messiah\* is Jesus?' Much like his baptism (back at chapter 1), Jesus is once again revealed by God as his son. But Jesus seems to prefer another term. He refers to himself as the 'Son of Man'. He is identifying with being human, maybe even proud of the fact. He takes on a mortal, servant title. Twice more he predicts his death, but the disciples\* are still partially blind. The idea of a suffering messiah\* is beyond their ability to understand.*

*As the disciples squabble about who will be greatest in the kingdom, they are again missing the point. The kingdom that Jesus will rule does not value authority, wealth or power as the world does. 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mark 10:45).*

Watch

**The Gospel of Mark DVD section 4 - Mark ch 9-10.**

Duration: 17min 34sec

Ask

What section spoke to you most of all? Why?

In what way could Jesus' kingdom be referred to as an 'upside-down' kingdom?

Jesus tell the disciples that whoever wants to be great must become a servant. What does this mean and how does it impact the way we live?

Jesus refers to himself as 'Son of Man' whilst others refer to him as 'Son of God'. What do these terms mean to you?

How can we receive the Kingdom of God like a child?

Dig  
Deeper

Read Isaiah chapter 53. The Prophet speaks of a servant who will suffer on behalf of the people. This servant will bear the punishment for their sins on their behalf. How do you respond to the picture Isaiah paints of this man?

## Week 5

# Jesus is Rejected Cornerstone

*Jesus has been making his way to Jerusalem\* since chapter 8. His grand entrance is the first time that Jesus allows himself to be honoured. The crowds shout 'hosanna' which means 'save us'. They believe he is the predicted messiah\* or King, one that will save the people by force from the Roman oppressors. 'What type of messiah is Jesus?' The crowds jump onto the wrong answer.*

*What follows are some of the hardest and strangest parts of Mark. Jesus curses an out of season fig tree for not bearing fruit. This may seem like an irrational fit of anger if we don't consider the clues Mark gives us in the story around the event. The fig tree is a 'living parable\*' representing Jesus's interactions with Jerusalem's religious authorities\* who have failed to bear fruit and nourish the people.*

*Jesus also identifies himself as the cornerstone of the Temple\*, but one rejected by the builders. The cornerstone is the most important stone in the building, one by which all other stones are lined up with. Since he has been rejected, the whole building will come crashing down. The nation of Israel is crushed by the Romans in AD70. The Temple is torn to the ground. But the Good News of Jesus endures.*

**Watch**

**The Gospel of Mark DVD section 5- Mark ch 11-13.**

Duration: 20min

**Ask**

What part of this section stood out the most for you?

What parts of the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem point to him as Messiah or King? What parts point to him as a servant?

Why do you think Jesus got so angry in the Temple?

What does Jesus say is the most important things that a follower of God should do? What does that mean for us today?

How do you feel about Jesus saying that followers of him will be persecuted?

**Dig  
Deeper**

Read Ephesians 2:11-22. Though the temple is destroyed in Jerusalem, Paul tells us that God has built for himself a new temple.

How is this temple different to the one in Jerusalem?

How does God dwell in it?

## Week 6

# Jesus is Triumphant King

*Jesus receives a royal anointing with perfume. Kings of Israel's\* the past were often anointed with oil to show that they had been given a task by God. Jesus tells the disciples that this anointing is preparing him for death.*

*Jesus's failure to live up to expectations finally proves too much for Judas. He plans to betray him to the religious authorities\*. What type of messiah\* is Jesus? Not the type that Judas is wanting.*

*Mark's recount of Jesus's trial and crucifixion mimics a royal coronation. Jesus is robed in purple, receives a crown and is lifted up high. However, he is not lifted up onto a throne, but onto a cross. A soldier who watches Jesus die finally proclaims what no human has proclaimed so far, Jesus is the Son of God. It is no coincidence that this soldier is a gentile (non-Jew). From now on, Jesus's Good News will go out to all the world.*

*Mark's Gospel\* ends as dramatically as it begins. Jesus is buried in a tomb. When women come on Sunday to dress his body they find it empty. An angel tells them Jesus has risen. He is no longer dead, but alive.*

*Mark's ending must have been considered too abrupt. Some time later verses 9-19 were added as a summary of what happened next. Often these added verses will be printed differently in your bible.*

**Watch**

**The Gospel of Mark DVD section 6 - Mark ch14-16.**

Duration: 28min 38 sec

**Ask**

What struck you the most about Jesus's manner of death?

What does it mean for your life that Jesus has risen?

How do you feel about Peter's denial of Jesus? What does his actions teach us today?

Mark begins his Gospel by telling us that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God. Now that you have come to the end, do you agree with Mark?

How do you respond to Jesus's call to follow him?

**Dig  
Deeper**

Reflect on what you have learnt and discussed over the last six weeks. Who is this Jesus to you? Many names have been given to him. Which one draws you the most?

## Glossary

**Disciples** - Someone who follows another person or another way of life and who submits himself to the discipline (teaching) of that leader or way.

**Gospel** - Word derived from the Anglo-Saxon *godspell* denoting “glad tidings” or “good news.” The New Testament uses the word to refer to the Good News of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

**Herod** - Political rulers during the lifetime of Christ. Christ was born when Herod the Great was ruling. Herod’s son, Herod Antipas, was the ruler of Galilee and Perea, the territories in which Jesus and John the Baptist carried out most of their ministries.

**Jerusalem** - Capital city of the modern state of Israel and city of the Temple in the time of Jesus.

**Jews/Jewish/Israel/Hebrews** - Descendants of Abraham who grew into a nation of people. They differed distinctly from surrounding nations because of their insistence on worship only one invisible God, Yahweh; their strict food and purity laws; and their refusal to mix with gentiles (non-Jews).

**John the Baptist** - A Prophet who prepared the people for Jesus’ coming, proclaimed the need for forgiveness of sins, and offered a baptism symbolising repentance.

**Messiah** - Along with the word ‘Christ’ means ‘anointed one’. This anointed one could refer to the King of Israel, chosen by God for a specific task. Throughout the Old Testament, prophets began to point to a King of Kings who would bring salvation to Israel. What grew from this is called the ‘Messianic Expectation’ as Israel kept watch for this Messiah to come and rule the world and make it right again.

**Parable** - Make up approximately 35 percent of the recorded sayings of Jesus. A parable is any unusual or striking speech or saying intended to stimulate thought because of its less than clear meaning. Care must be taken when interpreting parables in the Bible as they can take many different forms and use different tools such as metaphor (word pictures), hyperbole (exaggerated speech), proverb or allegory (extended metaphor).

**Prophet** - A person through whom God makes known His Word and Himself to His people.

**Religious Authorities** - Like politicians today, the religious authorities were made up of many different groups with many different motivations. Pharisees, scribes and law givers were responsible for most of the influence behind the interpretation of the Old Testament scriptures into Israel's laws in Jesus's day. They were fervently religious and steeped in man-made tradition. These attributes were the reason behind most of the clashes that Jesus had with them.

**Sabbath** - From the Hebrew word which means "cease" or "desist." The sabbath was a day (from Friday evening until Saturday evening in Jesus' time) when all ordinary work stopped. The bible says that God gave his people the sabbath as an opportunity to serve him, and as a reminder of two great truths in the Bible—creation and redemption.

**Temple** - The Temple was literally the place where people would go and meet with God and worship him. However, God could not just be approached willy-nilly. Sacrifices for sin had to be made and there were inner and outer courts of varying levels of holiness. The most inner room, or 'Holy of Holies', was where God dwelt and could only be entered once a year by the High Priest.

## Resources

This study uses **The Gospel of Mark DVD**  
from **The Lumo Project**.  
It is available from Koorong: [www.koorong.com](http://www.koorong.com)

### Books

**How to Read the Bible for all it's Worth**  
**How to Read the Bible Book by Book**

Both by Gordon Fee  
and available in the church resource library

### Online Videos

#### **The Bible Project**

Website or YouTube Channel

Start here for some very helpful short videos:

• **The Gospel of Mark**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVRixfameGY>

• **Read Scripture: Mark**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGHequ9-DtXk>

• **Bible Theme: Messiah**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dEh25pduQ8>

• **Bible Theme: The Gospel of the Kingdom**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmFPS0f-kzs>

#### **Other Videos**

These videos are a bit more in-depth but still short:

• **The Gospel of Mark: Seven Minute Seminary**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8J2LP9\\_f3SY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8J2LP9_f3SY)

• **Dr Ben Witherington III on the Book of Mark**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EybjWFnj3nM>

## For Leaders

### How to use this Study

1. Each week begins with a 'spoiler'. A taste of what will be shown in the DVD. This gives the participant a chance to be on the look out for certain key moments. It also gives some important background information.

Please read the summary out aloud to the group or allow time for individual reading, each week before you watch the DVD.

2. Watch the weeks section from the DVD in the NIV (not KJV). The section will be 2 or 3 chapters from the Gospel of Mark. For most weeks, the section will take approximately 20 minutes.

It's great if people bring their bibles for the discussion but try to encourage them to focus on the DVD, rather than read along. The experience of having the passages read and presented to them is part of study.

3. Use the questions as a guide for your group's discussion. There will be lots to take in and lots to talk about. You may like to start with hearing people's first impressions and use the questions only when discussion starts to die down.

Feel free to tailor the questions to what suits the members of your group and their needs at the time, but aim to keep discussions focussed on the weeks material. The aim of the study is to provide a broad overview. Try not to get too bogged down with single verses.

4. The 'Dig Deeper' sections are for people who want to do some follow up work at home. In the unlikely event that there is spare time at the end of the discussion, you may want to dive into this as a group.
5. There is a glossary at the back of the booklet, as well as a list of extra resources.