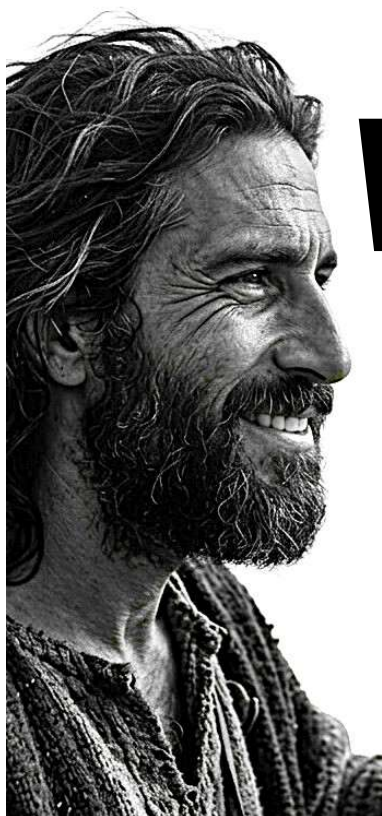




# Walking with Jesus:

A 31-day journey through the  
Gospel of Mark to deepen  
your experience of God.

*"God comes not to 'fix' you, but to welcome you into communion with him and his family. You are not a project to fix, but a person to love. We change not to be loved, but to love more deeply."*

A resource developed by Pastor Peter Watson, Illawarra Church of Christ  
[www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au](http://www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au)

Version: August 2026

All bible readings in this booklet come from the NIV.

At this is version 1 your feedback and/or corrections would be gratefully received at  
[peter.watson@illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au](mailto:peter.watson@illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au).



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# Introduction

This booklet is a journey to discover more about what a decision to follow Jesus means and how to develop an ongoing deep experience of God found through Jesus.

By the end of this booklet, you will have:

- Read one of the stories about Jesus called The Gospel of Mark.
- Discovered tools to help you grow your relationship with God.
- Learn about the values of Illawarra Church of Christ and how we are committed to helping you.

Before you go any further check out the following Commitment Prayer and consider doing these two things:

- (1) Offer it to God to confirm your commitment.
- (2) Write down any questions you have about this commitment prayer.

## GOSPELS

The bible has four stories of Jesus which are Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These are the first four books in the New Testament part of the bible. The Old Testament is the story of God before the coming of Jesus; the New Testament is the story of Jesus and the early church.

## Commitment Prayer

Thank you, God our Creator, for inviting me into your family.

I believe Jesus is who He said He is: the Son of God from the beginning.

I believe Jesus was crucified and died for my sin. I believe You raised Him to life again to show he is your Son.

I commit to You as the Lord of my life, seeking to live as the Spirit guides and empowers me.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making me your child.

## Questions

If you have questions or just want to discuss anything in this booklet further don't hesitate to contact Pastor Peter Watson at 0407-278-175 or [peter.watson@illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au](mailto:peter.watson@illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au)

As a community of believers Illawarra Church of Christ believes in asking questions. We don't want you to just accept what we say, we want you to ask questions and get answers that satisfy you from the bible and in discussion with other followers and seekers of Jesus so that together we might become 'fully mature in Christ' (Colossians 1:28).

You won't necessarily get all your questions answered, but you will learn to ask questions and how to grow as a follower of Jesus over the years to come.

Each day will include daily thoughts from the Bible and ideas to try for yourself. Together, we'll answer questions like "what does this mean,"

## BIBLE LINGO

The phrase 'Colossians 1:28' is a reference to a passage in the bible. 'Colossians' refers to a book in the bible. '1:28' is a reference to a chapter and a verse in that book. So, Colossians 1:28 means the book of Colossians, and 1:28 means chapter 1 verse 28.

The chapters and verses were added to the bible to make it easier to find a particular verse.

You can find a list of all the books of the bible in the contents page at the beginning of a printed bible.

“what should I do,” and “what does this change?” Our hope is that this tool can provide guidance as you begin your journey of following Jesus.

This booklet is organized into 31 days, but feel free to go at the pace that best helps you grow. You might even keep reading it repeatedly. Finishing the booklet is less important than finding direction, growing in confidence, and starting conversations with others about what you’re learning.

You can go through this booklet on your own, but it’s so much better when you read it with someone else, so don’t be afraid to reach out to a church leader or fellow attendee to ask for help. Following Jesus is a process of taking next steps, one day at a time. We’re thrilled you are joining in this journey for as the Chinese proverb says ‘A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

## 5W’s

Another thing you’ll notice here at Illawarra Church of Christ is that we frame our conversations around what we call our 5W values. These values outline what we believe are five basics every follower of Jesus needs to experience to grow a deep relationship with Jesus.

So, here’s a quick overview of the 5W’s which you’ll see crop up regularly in this booklet.

- **Grace-filled Welcome:** Where everyone is welcome. (Romans 15:7; Ephesians 2:8)
- **Awe-struck Worship:** Honouring God in his rightful place. (Psalm 95:6; 100:1-4)
- **Joy-filled Wonder:** Sharing stories of what God is doing. (Psalm 145:5-7; Galatians 5:22)
- **Life-transforming Word:** Discovering God’s truth. (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17)
- **Kingdom-building Works:** Building God’s abundant Kingdom. (Luke 4:18; Matthew 6:10; James 1:27)



Check out this short video explaining our 5W’s.  
<https://youtu.be/HVKXDmV69zw>

## Helpful Resources

This book is just one of many tools that can support your faith journey. Below are additional resources that can be a source of encouragement, guidance, and connection as you step into a deeper experience of God.

|                                                                                                                      |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br>ILLAWARRA<br>CHURCH OF CHRIST |  | Find a group to share your journey with at Illawarra Church of Christ.<br><a href="http://www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/connect">www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/connect</a> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                     |    | Go here to get our weekly sermons.<br><a href="http://www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/messages">www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/messages</a>                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                                                                     |    | <a href="http://www.youtube.com/@IllawarraChurchofChrist">www.youtube.com/@IllawarraChurchofChrist</a>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|    |    | Take the Bible with you wherever you go by downloading the Bible App. Listen to audio Bibles, study with friends, and much more - all for free.<br><a href="http://www.youversion.com/bible-app">www.youversion.com/bible-app</a>                                                                    |
|    |    | Source of bible reading plans and excellent website for searching the bible.<br><a href="https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/">https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/</a>                                                                                                                |
|    |    | An incredible resource to help you understand the Bible.<br><a href="http://www.bibleproject.com">www.bibleproject.com</a>                                                                                                                                                                           |
|  |   | The BEMA Podcast is a walk-through of the context of the Bible and the Text itself, as well as surrounding history.<br><a href="http://www.bemadiscipleship.com">www.bemadiscipleship.com</a>                                                                                                        |
|  |  | The LISTENER'S COMMENTARY is a study through the bible. An excellent resource for getting a deeper appreciation of the Old and New Testaments.<br>Start here with the New Testament at<br><a href="http://www.listenerscommentary.com/new-testament/">www.listenerscommentary.com/new-testament/</a> |

|                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  | A 7-day prayer guide.<br><a href="https://www.trypraying.org/">https://www.trypraying.org/</a> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

# Day 01: Good News

## Bible Reading: Mark 1:1-8

### John the Baptist Prepares the Way

*1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God. 2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:*

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way"—*

*3 "a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.*

*4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. 6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

## You are welcome here!

What you read in the first part of Mark might be confusing, that's okay because that is what we're here to help you with.

At Illawarra Church of Christ, we believe God has revealed himself in the bible and that every person should personally acquaint themselves with what the bible teaches. We are not here to tell you what to believe but to point you towards the words of God and encourage you to engage with God directly.

Notice in verse 1 it tells us that the bible message is 'good news' because it reveals who God is in 'Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God'.

### Parallel Readings

In the footnotes I will reference where you can find the parallel to this reading in the Gospel of Matthew, Luke & John. A full list can be found at [www.bible-researcher.com/parallels.html](http://www.bible-researcher.com/parallels.html)

### GRACE

An acronym that can help you understand the idea of grace is 'God's Riches At Christ's Expense':

God's = G

Riches = R

At = A

Christ's = C

Expense = E

### 5W Value #4: WORD

Life-transforming word:  
Discovering God's truth.

We value God's word so every study will include some text from the Bible.

### 5W Value #1: WELCOME

Grace-filled Welcome: Where everyone is welcome.

We value being and giving welcome so we constantly reflect on how we can feel his welcome and extend his welcome.

One of the bits of good news you are going to discover in these studies is that 'everyone is welcome' to come into God's family, and that the way into the family is through what Jesus has done for us. In our church we believe this idea is so important that it is our very first value which we put like this: 'Grace-filled Welcome: Where everyone is welcome.

In the book of Ephesians, it tells us this:

*Ephesians 2:8-10 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

The key message to take away from this is that YOU are welcomed by God. Nothing you have ever done or could do will stop God loving you! Whether you choose to accept that message is up to you, but just remember God welcomes you.

Maybe this is a good time to meditate on the first line of our Commitment Prayer which is "Thank you, God our Creator, for inviting me into your family."

### COMMITMENT PRAYER

Thank you, God our Creator, for inviting me into your family.

I believe Jesus is who He said He is: the Son of God from the beginning.

I believe Jesus was crucified and died for my sin. I believe You raised Him to life again to show he is your Son.

I commit to You as the Lord of my life, seeking to live as the Spirit guides and empowers me.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making me your child.

## Going Deeper



Check out the sermon 'God wants you in his family' by Pastor Peter Watson which explores the idea of God's invitation to you to be part of his family. <https://youtu.be/5v7FWN14JEI>

## Day 02: Baptism

### Bible Reading: Mark 1:9-15

#### ***The Baptism and Testing of Jesus***

<sup>9</sup> At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup> Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. <sup>11</sup> And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup> At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, <sup>13</sup> and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

#### ***Jesus Announces the Good News***

<sup>14</sup> After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. <sup>15</sup> "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

## Good enough for Jesus

Did you notice that Jesus begins his public ministry by submitting to the practice of baptism and that his obedience to this pleased God.

In the early church the Apostle Peter gets asked a question by those who had heard

him preach the first sermon of the church. [Acts 2:14-42] about what they should do in response to Peter's message about Jesus and Peter says:

### **Acts 2:37-39**

*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

*38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

## **Going Deeper**



Check out the sermon and handouts by Pastor Peter Watson on baptism at <https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/churches-of-christ-who-are-we/>.

You will also find additional information about core practices and beliefs of the movement called 'Churches of Christ' of which we are a part.

## **Day 03: Community**

### **Bible Reading: Mark 1:16-20**

#### **Jesus Calls His First Disciples**

*16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.*

*19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.*

### **From 'me' to 'we'**

One of the cultural challenges of walking into a deeper experience of God is to move away from me to we.

Notice that Jesus could have been a person who went out by himself and taught about God, but instead he invited others to join with him and would spend the next three years spending the majority of his time with the twelve that he called and a wider group totalling about 120 people. [Acts 1:12-17]

## **Going Deeper**

Spend time reading and reflecting on the following 'one another' passages in the New Testament and notice that being in community with others is essential to being obedient to these life guidelines.

- Love One Another: John 13:34-35; John 15:19; Romans 12:10a; Romans 13:8; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10; 1 Peter 4:8; 1 John 3:11; 1 John 3:23; 1 John 4:7; 1 John 4:11-12; 2 John 1:5
- Honour One Another: Romans 12:10b
- Greet One Another: Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 2 Corinthians 13:12; 1 Peter 5:14.
- Welcome One Another: Romans 15:7
- Show Hospitality to One Another: 1 Peter 4:9

- Have Fellowship With One Another: 1 John 1:7
- Agree With One Another: 2 Corinthians 13:11b
- Live in Harmony With One Another: Romans 12:16; 15:5
- Be at Peace With One Another: Mark 9:50
- Be Kind to One Another: Ephesians 4:32a
- Forgive One Another: Ephesians 4:32b; Colossians 3:13b
- Bear With One Another: Ephesians 4:2-3; Colossians 3:13a
- Bear One Another's Burdens: Galatians 6:2
- Comfort One Another: 2 Corinthians 13:11a
- Care for One Another: 1 Corinthians 12:25
- Confess Sins to One Another: James 5:16a
- Pray for One Another: James 5:16b
- Encourage One Another: 1 Thessalonians 4:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:11a; Hebrews 10:25
- Build One Another Up: 1 Thessalonians 5:11b
- Exhort One Another: Hebrews 3:13
- Instruct One Another: Romans 15:14
- Teach and Admonish One Another: Colossians 3:16
- Sing With One Another: Ephesians 5:19
- Stir Up One Another to Love and Good Works: Hebrews 10:24
- Do Good to One Another: 1 Thessalonians 5:15
- Serve One Another: Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10
- Wash One Another's Feet: John 13:14
- Wait for One Another: 1 Corinthians 11:33
- Be Humble Toward One Another: 1 Peter 5:5
- Submit to One Another: Ephesians 5:21
- Speak the Truth to One Another: Ephesians 4:25; Colossians 3:9
- Do Not Speak Against One Another: James 4:11; 5:9
- Do Not Judge One Another: Romans 14:13
- Do Not Provoke One Another: Galatians 5:26a
- Do Not Envy One Another: Galatians 5:26

## Day 04: Authority

### Bible Reading: Mark 1:21-28

#### ***Jesus Drives Out an Impure Spirit***

<sup>21</sup> They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. <sup>22</sup> The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. <sup>23</sup> Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, <sup>24</sup> "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

<sup>25</sup> "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" <sup>26</sup> The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

<sup>27</sup> The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." <sup>28</sup> News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

## With authority!

Jesus hadn't been in public very long and yet he was being recognised for his unique ability to teach, to teach with authority!

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone who always quoted others but never gave their own opinion? That's the kind of teaching that was common in Jesus' day. The teachers would quote this or that Rabbi such as Hillel or Shammai. For example:

*Matthew 5:38-39 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.*

Jesus instead was a person who taught with authority and backed up his authority with his ability to give help to people like releasing them from spiritual oppressions.

Reflect on earlier verses in Mark as to why Jesus had a unique kind of authority.

*Mark 1:1 This is the beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the **Son of God**.*

*Mark 1:7 He announced, "The one who comes after me is **more powerful** than I. I am not worthy to bend down and untie his sandal straps.*

*Mark 1:11 And a voice came from heaven: "**You are my Son**, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

Important Note: As you read the bible you will find your comprehension grows. As you learn one lesson it will shed light on things you didn't notice before. In time you will grow in your understanding of the importance and meaning of terms like 'Son' and 'Son of God' and how these are used in different ways than you might initially understand.

### Susanna Wesley

1669-1742

Mother of John & Charles Wesley

Managing a chaotic household with nineteen children, Susanna Wesley found personal solitude by pulling her apron up over her head to pray. This visible ritual signalled to her large family that she was in quiet communion with God, creating an unbroken sanctuary of devotion amidst all the daily domestic chaos.

### Jewish Authorities

Hillel and Shammai were two prominent first-century BCE Jewish scholars whose opposing legal schools—Hillel favouring leniency, Shammai strictness—profoundly shaped Talmudic law and Jewish tradition.

## Going Deeper



Check out <https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/who-is-jesus/> for messages and resources that will help you better understand the term 'Son of God' as well as 'Son of Man'.

## Day 05: Prayer

### Bible Reading: Mark 1:29-39

*Jesus Heals Many*

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. <sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

### **Jesus Prays in a Solitary Place**

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." <sup>39</sup> So he travelled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

## **Intimacy before service**

Did you notice in the bible reading how busy Jesus was as people keep coming to him for help with their needs. The reality is that life never waits for us, it pushes in and people want us to meet their needs. It could be kids, it could be work, it could be family, it could be friends, or it could be the duties of life such as house or yard work. Person after person, email after email, social media post after social media post will keep on asking for our attention.

Did you also notice that Jesus determined in amongst all the pressures that time with his Father in Heaven was a priority, so he got up early in the morning and went and found a quiet place to pray.

If you want to have a real, intimate and life changing experience of God you will need to determine if you will pay the cost to spend regular one-on-one time with God.

## **Going Deeper**



One method some have found helpful is called 5WDevotions. In the appendix you will find a handout called 5WDevotions which Pastor Peter explains in a message called 'Developing a Daily Devotional Life'. Peter explains how you can use this 5W framework to spend 5 minutes with God or a whole hour with God.

You can watch this message at <https://youtu.be/pq49w9j1xLw>



Here is another resource called 'The 7-day prayer guide' which can be found at <https://www.trypraying.org/>

## **Day 06: Spreading the wonder**

### **Bible Reading: Mark 1:40-45**

#### **Jesus Heals a Man With Leprosy**

<sup>40</sup> A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me

clean.”

<sup>41</sup> Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” <sup>42</sup> Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

<sup>43</sup> Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: <sup>44</sup> “See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” <sup>45</sup> Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

## Good news can’t be contained

Before there was social media that went viral there were good news stories that couldn’t be contained.

In the church people sometimes feel under pressure to go and ‘convert or evangelise’ people. Sometimes churches/believers even have the reputation for ‘bashing people with the gospel’.

Notice some important principles from this story.

- Jesus was deeply concerned that the man be reconciled with his community. As you grow in your understanding of the cultural background of the bible you will discover that a person with leprosy was deemed ‘unclean’ and had to stay away from others. They even had to shout ‘unclean, unclean’ so that others could stay away from them. If for some reason the leprosy went away they could go to a priest who after some investigations could declare them clean which allowed them to be in contact with others again. So, when Jesus asked the man to ‘go to the priest’ he was wanting the man to be able to reconnect with his family, friends and community.
- The reason the man’s testimony was effective was because he had a real change in his life. So, unless you’ve had a real experience of God you don’t have something to tell others about.
- It is the demonstrable change in your life that will be the powerful testimony.
- You are never seeking to ‘convert’ someone, instead you are sharing your ‘good news’ experience and inviting others to meet with God so they too can have an experience of ‘good news’ in their life.

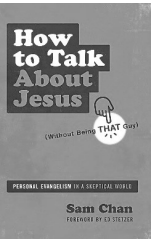
## Going Deeper

Sam Chan helps you build confidence in sharing your faith and teaches you how to tell your story in socially appropriate ways.

### 5W Value #3: WONDER

Joy-filled wonder: Sharing stories of what God is doing.

God is good and so we value remembering his goodness and telling stories about his goodness.

|                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     |  <p>koorong.com/products/how-to-talk-about-jesus-personal-evangelism-in-a-skeptical-world-without-being-that-guy-566411</p> |
| <p>Check out some testimonies of how God is good even in very difficult times and circumstances.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                     | <p>Watch something from<br/> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/@JoniandFriendsVideo">www.youtube.com/@JoniandFriendsVideo</a></p>                                                                             |
|                     | <p>Especially the testimony of Joni Eareckson Tada found at<br/> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lj2L2Znz5s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5lj2L2Znz5s</a></p>                                   |

## Day 07: Authority Part 2

### Bible Reading: Mark 2:1-12

#### ***Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man***

**2** A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. <sup>2</sup> They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. <sup>3</sup> Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. <sup>4</sup> Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” <sup>6</sup> Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, <sup>7</sup> “Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” <sup>8</sup> Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? <sup>9</sup> Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’ <sup>10</sup> But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, <sup>11</sup> “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” <sup>12</sup> He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

## What kind of authority

On day 4 we discussed Jesus' authority and how he was different to teachers of the day who tended to quote others. Jesus taught and backed up his teaching by displaying the ability to release people from spiritual oppression.

Notice here how Jesus' reputation is growing because 'large numbers' were gathering to hear and get healed by Jesus.

A key part of this passage which speaks to Jesus' authority can be found in verse 7.

*<sup>7</sup> "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

Throughout the Old Testament it is only God who forgives sins.

*Psalms 103:10-12 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*

*Nehemiah 9:17 But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.*

But we find throughout the New Testament that Jesus forgives sins and according to these religious teachers he is committing blasphemy by equating himself with God. Remember back to our passage from Acts 2:39 when talking about baptism it said:

*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

### COMMITMENT PRAYER

Thank you, God our Creator, for inviting me into your family.

I believe Jesus is who He said He is: the Son of God from the beginning.

I believe Jesus was crucified and died for my sin. I believe You raised Him to life again to show he is your Son.

I commit to You as the Lord of my life, seeking to live as the Spirit guides and empowers me.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making me your child.

### PHARISEES

Influential Jewish leaders who strictly enforced religious traditions and Mosaic law, frequently clashing with Jesus over legalism, piety, and authority.

## Going Deeper



Check out <https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/who-is-jesus/> for message about 'Who did Jesus think he was?'

Review the Commitment Prayer for what we believe the bible teaches about Jesus.

## Day 08: Who is welcome?

### Bible Reading: Mark 2:13-17

### **Jesus Calls Levi and Eats With Sinners**

<sup>13</sup> Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

<sup>14</sup> As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

<sup>15</sup> While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. <sup>16</sup> When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

<sup>17</sup> On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

### **Where is the boundary?**

I wonder who you think couldn't be welcomed by God? Where is the boundary between those who 'deserve' to be welcomed and those who 'don't deserve' to be welcome into God's family?

Have you ever spent time contemplating who it was that Jesus hung out with the most and who he said was most welcome?

Notice in this passage there are four groups of people, the tax collectors, the sinners, the disciples and the Pharisees and only one of them, the Pharisees, were the respectable ones.

Throughout the bible we constantly find that God reaches out to include those we wouldn't. Notice particularly the last verse which summarises Jesus' teaching about who is welcomed.

### **Going Deeper**



Check out the message 'Do you have a Jonah or Jesus Spirit?' by Pastor Peter Watson for a deeper understanding of who God is willing to welcome into his family.  
<https://youtu.be/k07cFCR4AF4>

## **Day 09: Changing your thinking**

### **Bible Reading: Mark 2:18-28**

#### **Jesus Questioned About Fasting**

<sup>18</sup> Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. <sup>20</sup> But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

<sup>21</sup> "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. <sup>22</sup> And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

#### **Jesus Is Lord of the Sabbath**

<sup>23</sup> One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. <sup>24</sup> The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful

on the Sabbath?"

<sup>25</sup> He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? <sup>26</sup> In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

<sup>27</sup> Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

## Different Perspectives

I used to be the Pastor of Church in the Market Place, and our address was 400 Oxford Street, Bondi Junction. People would regularly come into our church office looking for other buildings in the street and I could never understand why they were lost until I discovered that not every country has even numbers on one side and odd numbers on the other side of the street. That change in understanding helped me when I went to other countries because I realised I had to give up my previous way of thinking, so I didn't get lost in a new country.

One of the challenges of deciding to follow Jesus is that we might have to give up previous ways of thinking. Our 'rules of life' might need to change.

In these stories about fasting and the Sabbath Jesus is teaching us that we need to be prepared to change our minds and we might need to change so that we can keep the main thing the main thing. Jesus summarises the main thing in Mark 12:30-31:

<sup>30</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

### MOUNTAINS

In the Bible, mountains serve as sacred locations for divine encounters, revelation, and covenants, notably at Mount Sinai and the Mount of Transfiguration. Symbolically, they represent stability, kingdom authority, and God's unshakeable power, while frequently functioning as places of solitude, prayer, and spiritual transformation.

## Going Deeper



Check out this brilliant message by Tim Mackie (from the highly recommended <https://bibleproject.com/>) about how we might need to change the way we think about Hell and the Kingdom of God. <https://youtu.be/llzDdqxla6c>

## Day 10: The Twelve

### Bible Reading: Mark 3:1-19

#### *Jesus Heals on the Sabbath*

<sup>3</sup> Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shrivelled hand was there. <sup>2</sup> Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. <sup>3</sup> Jesus said to the man with the shrivelled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

<sup>4</sup> Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to

kill?" But they remained silent.

<sup>5</sup> He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. <sup>6</sup> Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

### Crowds Follow Jesus

<sup>7</sup> Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. <sup>8</sup> When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the

Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. <sup>9</sup> Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. <sup>10</sup> For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. <sup>11</sup> Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." <sup>12</sup> But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.

### Jesus Appoints the Twelve

<sup>13</sup> Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. <sup>14</sup> He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and to have authority to drive out demons. <sup>16</sup> These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), <sup>17</sup> James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder"), <sup>18</sup> Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

## A deeper calling

Have you noticed some themes being repeated? This is a normal principle of education, and its purpose is to help you recall, relearn and go deeper.

In Mark 3:1-6 we see Jesus continuing to challenge views of the Sabbath and to whom God gives priority. In Mark 3:7-12 crowds continue to gather, and Jesus heals in ways that prompt people to recognise his unique authority as the Son of God.

Here in Mark 3:13-19 we see a furthering of his call of disciples that we saw begin in Mark 1:16-20.

Note a couple of ideas that will help you see more as the story unfolds.

1. Jesus goes up on a mountainside. Mountains designate sacred places and many important things happen on mountains e.g. Moses went up the mountain to get the commandments. (See Exodus 19:3) Whenever you read about a mountain stop and consider what important thing might be happening.
2. Jesus calls twelve disciples. Numbers often (not always) represent ideas in Jewish thought. If you see a particular number stop and consider if that number is representing an idea rather than just being a count of something. For example: 1 = God; 2 = Tablets of Moses; 3 = Community; 4 = Gentiles i.e. 4 corners of the earth; 5 = Books of Moses; 6 = Sinful man; 7 = Completion; 10

### Five key groups in Judaism in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century

| HERODIANS                                                                                   | SADDUCEES                                                                                           | ESSENES                                                                              | ZEALOTS                                                                  | PHARISEES                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MESSES GREEK WORLDVIEW with BIBLICAL. Likes theater, luxury, plumbing, Has synagogue & God. | PRIESTS, but CORRUPT. Wordly. Use priesthood for personal gain. Minimal concern for spiritual walk. | PROUD PRIESTS broke off "hid" in DESERT. Devoted to LEARNING, COPYING, WALKING TEXT. | We will do the right thing and KILL THE ROMANS in our way. USE VIOLENCE. | Take same approach (ZEAL & DEVOTION), but NOT USE THE SWORD. Non-violent. |
|                                                                                             |                                                                                                     |                                                                                      |                                                                          |                                                                           |

(7+3) = Complete Community; 12 =  
Tribes of Israel; 40 = Testing.

## Going Deeper

Consider the two ideas above and reread Mark 3:13-19 and consider what deeper point might be being made. Don't be concerned about 'being right' as the more you engage with the text the more you will discover.

## Day 11: The Family

### Bible Reading: Mark 3:20-35

#### ***Jesus Accused by His Family and by Teachers of the Law***

<sup>20</sup> Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. <sup>21</sup> When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."

<sup>22</sup> And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons."

<sup>23</sup> So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? <sup>24</sup> If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. <sup>25</sup> If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. <sup>27</sup> In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man's house. <sup>28</sup> Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin."

<sup>30</sup> He said this because they were saying, "He has an impure spirit."

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. <sup>32</sup> A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you."

<sup>33</sup> "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

<sup>34</sup> Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! <sup>35</sup> Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

## Are you a brother or sister of Jesus?

It's important to note that no verse or passage contains all the truth of the bible and so we need to build up a framework of key bible teachings to understand what the bible teaches.

Here in Mark 3:33-35 we have an important and very challenging pillar of that framework. Here Jesus is teaching that right beliefs in and of themselves do not make you a member of God's family.

There are two key things underlying what Jesus is getting to which are clearer when we look at a parallel passage in Luke 8:21. Let's look at them side-by-side to see what you notice.

*Mark 3:35*

*Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."*

*Luke 8:21*

*He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."*

### PARALLEL PASSAGES

Parallel passages in the Gospels are accounts of the same event, parable, or teaching recorded by multiple authors, providing distinct yet complementary perspectives on Jesus's life.

A table of parallel passages can be found at [www.bible-researcher.com/parallels.html](http://www.bible-researcher.com/parallels.html)

Mark has 'whoever does' while Luke has 'who hear ... and put into practice'. It appears that you must 'hear' what God says and then you have to 'apply' what he says.

But you might be thinking, didn't you say on Day 1 that it was 'all by grace'. That I don't have to do anything to earn my relationship with God?

Yes, that is true! A relationship with God is given freely, but if it is accepted then the natural consequence is that we want to hear what God is saying and live it out.

## Going Deeper

Review these passages of the bible and reflect on how they help create a more complete framework of faith.

### **Romans 10:9-13**

*<sup>9</sup> If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. <sup>11</sup> As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, <sup>13</sup> for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

### **James 1:22-27**

*<sup>22</sup> Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup> and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup> But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do.*

*<sup>26</sup> Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless. <sup>27</sup> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.*

## Day 12: Parables

### **Bible Reading: Mark 4:1-34**

#### **The Parable of the Sower**

*<sup>4</sup> Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. <sup>2</sup> He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: <sup>3</sup> "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."*

*<sup>9</sup> Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."*

*<sup>10</sup> When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup> He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables <sup>12</sup> so that,*

*"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,  
and ever hearing but never understanding;*

otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? <sup>14</sup> The farmer sows the word. <sup>15</sup> Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. <sup>16</sup> Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>18</sup> Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup> but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>20</sup> Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

### **A Lamp on a Stand**

<sup>21</sup> He said to them, "Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on its stand? <sup>22</sup> For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. <sup>23</sup> If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear."

<sup>24</sup> "Consider carefully what you hear," he continued. "With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. <sup>25</sup> Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them."

### **The Parable of the Growing Seed**

<sup>26</sup> He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. <sup>27</sup> Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. <sup>28</sup> All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. <sup>29</sup> As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

### **The Parable of the Mustard Seed**

<sup>30</sup> Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? <sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. <sup>32</sup> Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade."

<sup>33</sup> With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. <sup>34</sup> He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

## **Do's and don'ts of reading parables**

Rather than explaining all these parables I want to provide you with some guidelines for reading the parables and then encourage you to pick one of the parables and spend time reading and meditating on it.

Here are some principles to try and keep in mind:

### **Do's**

- **Identify the main point:** Focus on the primary message Jesus intended to convey. Most parables centre on one major truth about the Kingdom of God rather than multiple hidden lessons.
  - Read the parable a couple of times.
  - Ask God for wisdom (James 1:5) and that the Holy Spirit guide you into all truth (John 16:13).
  - Write down questions that come to mind as you use the following principles.
- **Examine the immediate context:** Pay close attention to who Jesus was speaking to (e.g., Pharisees vs. disciples) and the specific question or

situation that prompted the parable.

- **Let explicit Scripture guide interpretation:** Cross-reference parables with plain theological passages (such as the Epistles) to ensure your conclusions align with the broader biblical canon.
- **Look for the plot twist:** Notice where Jesus subverts cultural expectations—like making a Samaritan the hero or paying late workers the same wage as early ones—to highlight God's grace or justice.
- **For extra insight do some research on 1st-century culture:** Ground your reading in ancient Jewish customs, agricultural practices, and social dynamics to understand what shocked or challenged the original listeners.

### Don'ts

- **Don't over-allegorize every detail:** Avoid forcing symbolic spiritual meaning onto every minor plot element (e.g., treating the two coins given to the innkeeper in the Good Samaritan story as the two Sacraments).
- **Don't build core doctrines on background details:** Do not establish major theological beliefs on secondary narrative elements that exist simply to move the story forward.
- **Don't skip the original audience:** Avoid jumping directly to modern application without first asking how the parable confronted the beliefs and prejudices of its 1st-century hearers.
- **Don't treat parables as literal history:** Recognize that parables are masterfully crafted illustrative stories from daily life designed to reveal spiritual realities, not historical accounts of specific individuals.

## Going Deeper

What  
Do Jesus'  
Parables  
Mean?

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS  
R. C. SPROUL

Practice reading and meditating on one of the other parables to deepen your relationship with God. Like any good relationship you need to practice, and you can't practice if someone tells you what each bit means.

This small book by RC Sproul is a helpful book. You can access this and other free eBooks from <https://store.ligonier.org/collection/crucial-questions-ebooks>

## Day 13: The other side

### Bible Reading: Mark 4:35-41

#### *Jesus Calms the Storm*

<sup>35</sup> That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." <sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

<sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

<sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

## Asking questions

A good practice when reading scripture is to interrogate scripture by asking questions like what, why, when, how, where and who.

As you get used to reading the bible and gain an orientation around the key themes you will then notice seemingly trivial but important points.

Let's practice with this passage.

Mark 4:35-41

Potential questions or highlights

### ***Jesus Calms the Storm***

*<sup>35</sup> That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." <sup>36</sup> Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. <sup>37</sup> A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. <sup>38</sup> Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"*

*<sup>39</sup> He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

*<sup>40</sup> He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"*

*<sup>41</sup> They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"*

- Notice this is a heading. It is NOT an original part of the bible and has been added to help understanding. Use headings but only as a guide.
- Why 'that day'? Did something happen earlier in the day?
- Where is 'the other side'? Is this important?
- Is using a boat to move normal? What does this tell us about the culture?
- How could Jesus sleep in a storm?
- How could Jesus stop a storm? What does this say about who Jesus is?
- It seems like Jesus is a little bit harsh, is this true?
- Why are the disciples 'terrified' of someone who can stop a storm?

Here are a few brief thoughts that some investigation using resources like Biblehub.com can give you.

- The 'other side' represents Jesus moving from a Jewish region to a region of Gentiles (non-Jews). See Mark 5:1 to see this identified as 'Gerasenes'.
- Note how reading the passages before and after the passage you are focused on can help give you context. Before was parables, after is the context of where he goes.
- If you refer to Mark 1:16-20 you will notice that Jesus's first disciples were fishermen. They were experienced at handling boats and being in storms on the lake. This makes it even more surprising that they were afraid.

## Going Deeper

Use the diagram that explains how you might use the free resources at biblehub.com to do some of your own investigations.

biblehub.com/commentaries/mark/4-35.htm

Mark 4:35

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◀ Mark 4:35 ▶

And the same day, when the even was come, he said unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.

Jump to: Alford • Barnes • Bengel • Benson • BI • Calvin • Cambridge • Clarke • Darby • Deane • Expositors • Exp Dct • Exp Gk • Gaebele • GSB • Gill • Gray • Guzik • Haydock • Homiletics • JFB • Kelly • King • Lange • MacLaren • MHC • MHQW • Meyer • Parker • PNT • Poole • Pulp • Sermon • SCD • TTB • VWS • WBS • TSK

EXPOSITORS (ENGLISH BIBLE)

EXEGETICAL (ORIGINAL LANGUAGES)

Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers

Meyer's NT Commentary

MacLaren's Expositions

Mark

#### Instructions:

1. Go to biblehub.com
2. Select your bible passage
3. Select "Commen" for a commentary on this passage.
4. Scroll down to see commentaries from different bible scholars.
5. Investigate different translations of the bible. (A translation just interprets the original language using slightly different English words.) NIV is the one I most often use.
6. Investigate the other resources.

## Day 14: Release

### Bible Reading: Mark 5:1-20

#### Jesus Restores a Demon-Possessed Man

**5** They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. **2** When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. **3** This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. **4** For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. **5** Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. **6** When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. **7** He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" **8** For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!" **9** Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." **10** And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area. **11** A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. **12** The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." **13** He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned. **14** Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. **15** When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. **16** Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. **17** Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region. **18** As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. **19** Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." **20** So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

### What release do you require?

We learnt last lesson that Jesus has gone over into a Gentile region, a place where most Jews would not think that God was present showing that Jesus came for everyone, everyone!

Jesus does several things that show how gracious his heart is towards those whom society writes off:

1. As mentioned, he goes towards the places that the 'righteous' view as unclean.
2. He interacts with a person who had been rejected by society such that they would chain him to keep him restrained.
3. He recognises the underlying issue - in this case demonic possession. [Note: This is not to say that all this type of behaviour is demonic, sometimes it might be a biological or psychological issue, but in this specific case Jesus identifies it as demonic.]
4. He uses his power for the benefit of the man to restore him (v18) to his community.

#### **5W Value #5: WORKS**

Kingdom-building works.  
Building God's abundant Kingdom

God calls us to work for the good of the world and so we value taking actions that bless others.

Notice the reactions that speak of how others respond to God's goodness and priorities.

1. The man sees in Jesus someone who cares and has both compassion and authority to help him.
2. The demons recognise the authority of Jesus.
3. The society is upset by the financial cost of the healing for the community loses 2000 pigs when they run off a cliff and drown.
4. The man couldn't help but tell others what God in Jesus had done for him and his changed life demonstrated the reality of God's work.

## **Going Deeper**

Take some time to reflect on this story and on Luke 4:18-19 and ask God for the freedom or recovery you need in your life.

## **Day 15: In public**

### **Bible Reading: Mark 5:21-43**

#### ***Jesus Raises a Dead Girl and Heals a Sick Woman***

*<sup>21</sup> When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. <sup>22</sup> Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. <sup>23</sup> He pleaded earnestly with him, "My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live." <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him. A large crowd followed and pressed around him. <sup>25</sup> And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. <sup>26</sup> She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. <sup>27</sup> When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, <sup>28</sup> because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." <sup>29</sup> Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.*

<sup>30</sup> At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

<sup>31</sup> "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

<sup>32</sup> But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup> Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher anymore?"

<sup>36</sup> Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, "Don't be afraid; just believe."

<sup>37</sup> He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. <sup>39</sup> He went in and said to them, "Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep." <sup>40</sup> But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child's father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. <sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum!" (which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"). <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. <sup>43</sup> He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

## But that's a private matter!

Have you ever said or heard 'I don't want to talk about that because that's a private matter.' Notice how in these stories Jesus makes a personal matter public and a public matter private. Why?

I'll let you wrestle with the why, but I just want you to notice what is happening.

Here are some things to notice and contemplate:

1. Verse 21: Jesus has crossed back over the lake; he's back in Jewish land. It seems important to the author that we notice that Jesus easily moves between different types of people - almost as if he is saying that Jesus is here for everyone!
2. Verse 22: A synagogue leader, an important religious leader in that community, has such a need that he is willing to fall at Jesus feet and plead for his help. Perhaps there is something you need to fall at the feet of Jesus and plead for?
3. Verse 25 and following: Jesus interacts with a woman who is 'unclean'. According to the social conventions of the day this woman should not have been in the crowd and should not have touched Jesus because it made Jesus 'unclean'.
4. Verse 29 and following: The woman is healed and yet Jesus makes public what has happened. He does not scold her for making him unclean. He does not keep her issue private, why?
5. Verse 35 and following: Jesus returns his attention to Jaris the synagogue leader. Jesus could have performed this miracle publicly and yet he does it privately and tells them to not tell anyone about it. Why?

## Going Deeper

Find out more about Synagogues. Check out resources like Wikipedia and BibleHub.com.

- <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagogue>
- [https://biblehub.com/library/edersheim/sketches\\_of\\_jewish\\_social\\_life/chapter\\_16\\_synagogues\\_their\\_origin.htm](https://biblehub.com/library/edersheim/sketches_of_jewish_social_life/chapter_16_synagogues_their_origin.htm)

## Day 16: Faith

### Bible Reading: Mark 6:1-13

#### ***A Prophet Without Honor***

**6** Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. **2** When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

*"Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?"* **3** *Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.*

**4** Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." **5** He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. **6** He was amazed at their lack of faith.

#### ***Jesus Sends Out the Twelve***

*Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.* **7** *Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.*

**8** *These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. **9** Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. **10** Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. **11** And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."*

**12** *They went out and preached that people should repent. **13** They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

### Same God different results

In these two stories we see two different results. In verse 5 we find a lack of miracles and in verse 13 we have many miracles. Why?

Notice in verse 2 that the people were 'amazed' and yet not many miracles happened because of a lack of faith. The author seems to be indicating that someone can be amazed by Jesus and yet not believe Jesus!

In the second story it is the disciples of Jesus who go out and many people are healed. It wasn't required for Jesus to be physically present for miracles to happen - it was delegated to his disciples.

As you read these stories what else do you notice?

#### **UNCLEAN**

In the Bible, "unclean" primarily refers to ritual or ceremonial impurity rather than physical dirtiness or moral sin. It signifies a temporary state of unfitness to enter God's sacred presence or participate in communal worship. Caused by bodily discharges, dead bodies, or forbidden foods, ritual cleansing restored full covenant fellowship.

### Going Deeper



Check out this teaching by Pastor Peter Watson on Healing which looks at James 5:13-16 and investigates the question: Does God Heal Today?

*<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

## Day 17: Bible Truth

### Bible Reading: Mark 6:14-29

#### **John the Baptist Beheaded**

<sup>14</sup> King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

<sup>15</sup> Others said, "He is Elijah."

And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago."

<sup>16</sup> But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!"

<sup>17</sup> For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. <sup>18</sup> For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup> So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, <sup>20</sup> because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

<sup>21</sup> Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. <sup>22</sup> When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." <sup>23</sup> And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

<sup>24</sup> She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"

"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

<sup>25</sup> At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

<sup>26</sup> The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup> So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, <sup>28</sup> and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup> On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

### Is the bible reliable

Have you ever wondered if the bible can be trusted?

One of the things that can give you additional confidence in the bible is when it reports accurately about historical figures.

At this point it can be helpful to realise there are several references to King Herod in

the New Testament, and they are not all the same person. (See the table.)

Notice the number of historical characters and references in this passage that you could check out. For example, King Herod, Jesus, John the Baptist, Elijah, Herodias and the Beheading of John the Baptist.

Notice also that this passage includes something that is not true. Reread verse 16 and notice that it reports that King Herod said, “John, whom I beheaded, had been raised from the dead!” The bible is reporting this as something King Herod

said, not that it is true! So be careful distinguishing between things that are reported and things that are said to be true.

| Name in New Testament | Dates of Reign | Key NT References & Context                                                               |
|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Herod the Great       | 37–4 BC        | Ordered the Massacre of the Innocents after the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2).               |
| Herod Archelaus       | 4 BC – AD 6    | Ruler of Judea whose reign prompted Joseph to take Jesus to Nazareth (Matthew 2:22).      |
| Herod Antipas         | 4 BC – AD 39   | Beheaded John the Baptist and questioned Jesus during His trial (Luke 23:7–12, Mark 6).   |
| Herod Philip II       | 4 BC – AD 34   | Tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (Luke 3:1); husband of Salome.                         |
| Herod Agrippa I       | AD 41–44       | Executed James the Apostle, arrested Peter, and died suddenly in Caesarea (Acts 12).      |
| Herod Agrippa II      | c. AD 50–93    | Great-grandson of Herod the Great who heard the defense of Paul the Apostle (Acts 25–26). |

## Going Deeper

For further reading about the reliability of the bible check out some of these articles.



Are Biblical Manuscripts Reliable?

<https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/are-biblical-manuscripts-reliable/>



Is the Bible Trustworthy?

<https://bibleproject.com/podcasts/bible-trustworthy/>



The Reliability of the Old Testament

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-reliability-of-the-old-testament/>

# Day 18: Self care

## Bible Reading: Mark 6:30-56

### Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

<sup>32</sup> So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. <sup>33</sup> But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. <sup>34</sup> When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

<sup>35</sup> By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. <sup>36</sup> Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat."

<sup>37</sup> But he answered, "You give them something to eat."

They said to him, "That would take more than half a year's wages<sup>[a]</sup>! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

<sup>38</sup> "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." When they found out, they said, "Five—and two fish."

<sup>39</sup> Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. <sup>40</sup> So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. <sup>41</sup> Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. <sup>42</sup> They all ate and were satisfied, <sup>43</sup> and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. <sup>44</sup> The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

### Jesus Walks on the Water

<sup>45</sup> Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>46</sup> After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

<sup>47</sup> Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. <sup>48</sup> He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, <sup>49</sup> but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, <sup>50</sup> because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." <sup>51</sup> Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, <sup>52</sup> for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

<sup>53</sup> When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. <sup>54</sup> As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. <sup>55</sup> They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. <sup>56</sup> And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

### NUMBERS

From Day 10

1 = God; 2 = Tablets of Moses; 3 = Community; 4 = Gentiles i.e. 4 corners of the earth; 5 = Books of Moses; 6 = Sinful man; 7 = Completion; 10 (7+3) = Complete Community; 12 = Tribes of Israel; 40 = Testing.

## Jesus cares about ordinary things

Often people think that Christianity is only about 'spiritual' things as if ordinary life and spiritual things are different domains and that spiritual things are more important!

But Jesus shows a profound care for the whole person. The bible teaches that humans are body and spirit and they work in harmony and are both profoundly important. Practically this means that both prayer and sleep are equally spiritual activities depending on your deepest needs at a particular time.

Notice in this passage how Jesus has concern for the whole person e.g. for rest (v31), for learning (v34) for food (v37)), for prayer (v46), for emotional comfort (v50), and for healing (v55).

Don't be afraid to ask God for the needs of your whole person.

## Going Deeper

On day 10 I briefly discussed how numbers in Jewish writing can represent ideas. What I gave was a simplified view and you might like to explore this idea more deeply by checking out the resources below.

Re-read Mark 6:30-44 alongside Mark 8:1-14 and think about how the numbers might be teaching something deeper than just counting how many people are being fed.

Hint:  $10 \times 10 = 1000$  can mean the group is all there, a complete group. 4 is a reference to gentiles. 5 is a reference to the Jewish people. What might 4000 and 5000 represent? What might the number of loaves and fish represent within the context of each story?



Meaning of Numbers in the Bible

<https://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/introduction.html>

### KEITH GREEN

Keith Green (1953–1982) was an American singer, songwriter, and pianist. Starting as a child prodigy signed to Decca Records, he became a prominent contemporary Christian musician and co-founded Last Days Ministries with his wife, Melody. Known for his uncompromising lyrics and ministry-driven music, Green died in a 1982 plane crash.

## Day 19: Heart not rules

### Bible Reading: Mark 7:1-23

#### *That Which Defiles*

*7 The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus <sup>2</sup> and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. <sup>3</sup> (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. <sup>4</sup> When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)*

*<sup>5</sup> So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?"*

<sup>6</sup> He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

*"These people honour me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.*

<sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain;

*their teachings are merely human rules.'*

<sup>8</sup> You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions."

<sup>9</sup> And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! <sup>10</sup> For Moses said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.' <sup>11</sup> But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— <sup>12</sup> then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. <sup>13</sup> Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that."

<sup>14</sup> Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. <sup>15</sup> Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them."

<sup>17</sup> After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. <sup>18</sup> "Are you so dull?" he asked. "Don't you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? <sup>19</sup> For it doesn't go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body." (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

<sup>20</sup> He went on: "What comes out of a person is what defiles them. <sup>21</sup> For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person."

### 5W Value #3 WORSHIP

Awestruck worship:  
Honouring God in his  
rightful place.

God is the creator and  
sustainer of all things and  
so we value giving him  
honour.

## It's about your heart

Keith Green sang a song called 'To Obey is Better than Sacrifice' which begins:



*To obey is better than sacrifice  
I don't need your money, I want your life  
And I hear you say that I'm coming back soon  
But you act like I'll never return '*

Look how this song compares with verse 7 above

<sup>7</sup> They worship me in vain;  
*their teachings are merely human rules.'*

It is easy to go to extremes in following God. One end is that it's all about obedience and obeying rules. In this 'rule' based religion we will find the rules proliferate and soon we are arguing about which rules and how well we keep them.

The other end is to say rules don't matter at all. We are free and just have to worship God.

But Jesus teaches us that following him begins and comes out of the heart and results in actions that love God, self and others. At Illawarra Church of Christ we express this in our third value: Worship: Honouring God in his rightful place.

## Going Deeper



This message by Pastor Peter Watson explores different pathways to worshipping God. It will help you discover and explore your spiritual style and how you can use this to gain a deeper experience of God in your life. <https://youtu.be/mFW8baKtC0g>



You can download the handout called 'Spiritual Pathways' using the QR code or at this link  
<https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Spiritual-pathways-streams-prayer-methods.pdf>

## Day 20: Jesus in Tyre

### Bible Reading: Mark 7:24-8:13

#### **Jesus Honors a Syrophenician Woman's Faith**

<sup>24</sup> Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. <sup>25</sup> In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. <sup>26</sup> The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

<sup>27</sup> "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

<sup>28</sup> "Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

<sup>29</sup> Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."

<sup>30</sup> She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

#### **Jesus Heals a Deaf and Mute Man**

<sup>31</sup> Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. <sup>32</sup> There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

<sup>33</sup> After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. <sup>34</sup> He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). <sup>35</sup> At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

<sup>36</sup> Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. <sup>37</sup> People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

#### **Jesus Feeds the Four Thousand**

<sup>8</sup> During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, <sup>2</sup> "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. <sup>3</sup> If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance."

<sup>4</sup> His disciples answered, "But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?"

<sup>5</sup> "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied.

<sup>6</sup> He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. <sup>7</sup> They had a

*few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. <sup>8</sup> The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. <sup>9</sup> About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, <sup>10</sup> he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.*

*<sup>11</sup> The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. <sup>12</sup> He sighed deeply and said, "Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it." <sup>13</sup> Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.*

## Jesus heads north

Notice how in these stories Jesus moves into areas such as Tyre (7:24) and the Decapolis (7:31). The fact that Jesus goes to these places influences how we view what Jesus does and speaks. For example, his 'rude and harsh' comments to the Syrophenician woman (7:27-28) is within the context of Jesus having gone to her area to minister to people just like her! We must be careful not to read into this story our current cultural expectations of behaviour. In Jesus day a respected Jewish male teacher would be expected to keep away from people like this, but instead Jesus heads straight into these environments and engages with them in cultural relevant ways that would be taken as radical inclusion.

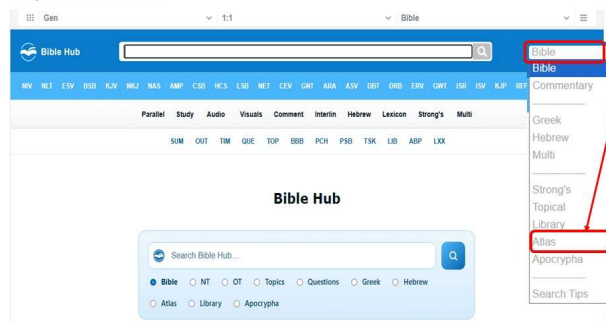
Again, Jesus feeding of the four thousand is in a primarily gentile area and the number of 4000 is representing his acceptance of gentiles. [The number for gentiles = 4; and the number 1000 = 10 complete x 10 complete = complete community.]

Re-read these stories with these thoughts in mind and see how the story reveals Jesus in unexpected ways.

## Going Deeper

Research the area of Tyre using BibleHub.com

<https://biblehub.com/>



### Instructions:

1. Go to biblehub.com
2. Go to dropdown menu
3. Select 'Atlas'
4. You can scroll through maps or search for maps e.g. search for Tyre and you will find out information about the region and where it is referenced in the bible.
5. You should end up at this page to review information about Tyre <https://biblehub.com/atlas/tyre.htm>

## Day 21: Understanding

### Bible Reading: Mark 8:14-9:1

#### *The Yeast of the Pharisees and Herod*

*<sup>14</sup> The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. <sup>15</sup> "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."*

*<sup>16</sup> They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."*

<sup>17</sup> Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?" <sup>18</sup> Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? <sup>19</sup> When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"

"Twelve," they replied.

<sup>20</sup> "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"

They answered, "Seven."

<sup>21</sup> He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

### **Jesus Heals a Blind Man at Bethsaida**

<sup>22</sup> They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. <sup>23</sup> He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

<sup>24</sup> He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

<sup>25</sup> Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. <sup>26</sup> Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."

### **Peter Declares That Jesus Is the Messiah**

<sup>27</sup> Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

<sup>28</sup> They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

<sup>29</sup> "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

<sup>30</sup> Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

### **Jesus Predicts His Death**

<sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

<sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

### **The Way of the Cross**

<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

<sup>9</sup> And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

## **Noticing the threads**

As you read the scriptures two opposite, but complementary habits can be helpful. One is reading a small section and delving into the details, the other is reading a larger section and trying to pick up the threads from one story to the next. Don't be afraid of mixing these up, maybe one day read a large section, and the next few days review that section bit by bit.

Here we are looking at five sections and seeing if we can pick up a joining thread. (Remember that section headings are not part of the original text, they are added to

help with understanding.)

In the previous section Jesus had fed the bodies of the four thousand with bread, now notice how Mark (the author) puts together some more stories to extend that idea to the whole person.

Look at v21, the second half of v23 and v25, v27-29, v33, what do you notice?

Here's what I notice:

- V21 understand?
- V23 and v25 see?
- V27-29 who do you say I am?
- V33 mind

It feels to me that Mark is asking us to consider how to use our minds, our eyes, and our experiences to consider who Jesus is so that we can then respond to the call of discipleship given in 8:34-9:1.

## Going Deeper

Prayerfully review our commitment prayer and ask God to give you a deeper appreciation and experience of his love and grace in your life.

*Thank you, God our Creator, for inviting me into your family.*

*I believe Jesus is who He said He is: the Son of God from the beginning.*

*I believe Jesus was crucified and died for my sin. I believe You raised Him to life again to show he is your Son.*

*I commit to You as the Lord of my life, seeking to live as the Spirit guides and empowers me.*

*Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making me your child.*

### MOSES & ELIJAH

Moses represents the law. Elijah represents the prophets. The 'law & the prophets' was a way of talking about the whole Old Testament revelation.

## Day 22: A greater prophet

### Bible Reading: Mark 9:2-13

#### **The Transfiguration**

<sup>2</sup> After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup> And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup> (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

<sup>7</sup> Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"

<sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup> They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant.

<sup>11</sup> And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"

<sup>12</sup> Jesus replied, "To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? <sup>13</sup> But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him."

## Moses, Elijah & Jesus

What have you noticed about the context of this story? Did you notice it is on a high mountain? Remember in Day 12 we talked about mountains representing places that are close to God. Here our scene is set on a mountain reminiscent of Moses going up the mountain to get the commandments from God in Exodus 19. As you read the whole bible you will notice connections between stories.

Additionally, in Jewish thought of Jesus day two of the greatest heroes were Elijah and Moses.

Here we have Jesus go up a mountain with his three key disciples and meet two of the greatest Jewish heroes and how does Peter respond?

Peter suggests they put up three shelters, in essence is saying that we now have the three greatest prophets of God together and we should honour them all here on this mountain with shelters.

Review Mark 8:29 and notice that Peter has previously acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah. Peter is acknowledging Jesus as a significant figure but has yet to truly understand who Jesus is. In 9:7-8 God speaks and says that Jesus is his Son and suddenly only Jesus is present, Moses and Elijah have gone.

Lastly, notice how Jesus was different than all who had come before, his way is the way of suffering and rejection. (See 9:12; 31.)

## Going Deeper

If you didn't review the 'Going Deeper' resources on Day 4 go back and check that out, it explains the significance of the terms 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man'.

Another option is to go and read the book of Hebrews which is all about how Jesus is superior to everything else in creation.

## Day 23: What are you arguing about?

### Bible Reading: Mark 9:14 - 10:31

#### ***Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by an Impure Spirit***

*<sup>14</sup> When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. <sup>15</sup> As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.*

*<sup>16</sup> "What are you arguing with them about?" he asked.*

*<sup>17</sup> A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. <sup>18</sup> Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."*

*<sup>19</sup> "You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."*

*<sup>20</sup> So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.*

*<sup>21</sup> Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?"*

*"From childhood," he answered. <sup>22</sup> "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do*

#### **MESSIAH**

In the New Testament, "Messiah" translates to "Christ" or "Anointed One," identifying Jesus as the prophesied deliverer and divine Savior who redeems humanity from sin through his death and resurrection.

anything, take pity on us and help us.”

<sup>23</sup> “If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

<sup>24</sup> Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

<sup>25</sup> When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

<sup>26</sup> The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” <sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

<sup>28</sup> After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

<sup>29</sup> He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

### **Jesus Predicts His Death a Second Time**

<sup>30</sup> They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, <sup>31</sup> because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” <sup>32</sup> But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

<sup>33</sup> They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” <sup>34</sup> But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

<sup>35</sup> Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

<sup>36</sup> He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup> “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

### **Whoever Is Not Against Us Is for Us**

<sup>38</sup> “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

<sup>39</sup> “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, <sup>40</sup> for whoever is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

### **Causing to Stumble**

<sup>42</sup> “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup> If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. [44] <sup>45</sup> And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. [46] <sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup> where

“the worms that eat them do not die,  
and the fire is not quenched.”

<sup>49</sup> Everyone will be salted with fire.

<sup>50</sup> “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

### **Divorce**

<sup>10</sup> Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

<sup>2</sup> Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

<sup>3</sup> “What did Moses command you?” he replied.

<sup>4</sup> They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”

<sup>5</sup> “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. <sup>6</sup> “But at the

beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'<sup>10</sup> 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,<sup>11</sup> 8 and the two will become one flesh.<sup>12</sup> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

<sup>10</sup> When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. <sup>11</sup> He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. <sup>12</sup> And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

### **The Little Children and Jesus**

<sup>13</sup> People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them.

<sup>14</sup> When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>15</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." <sup>16</sup> And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

### **The Rich and the Kingdom of God**

<sup>17</sup> As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

<sup>18</sup> "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good—except God alone. <sup>19</sup> You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honour your father and mother.'<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy."

<sup>21</sup> Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

<sup>22</sup> At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

<sup>24</sup> The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is<sup>25</sup> to enter the kingdom of God! <sup>25</sup> It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

<sup>26</sup> The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

<sup>28</sup> Then Peter spoke up, "We have left everything to follow you!"

<sup>29</sup> "Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel <sup>30</sup> will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. <sup>31</sup> But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

### **CHRONOLOGY**

Unlike modern biographies focused on strict timelines, ancient Greco-Roman biographies prioritized thematic organization, grouping events, speeches, and deeds to reveal a subject's character and mission rather than exact chronological order.

## **Disputes and Arguments**

The author Mark again collects some stories with a similar theme, the theme of disputes and arguing which can be seen in 9:15-17, 33, 38; 10:2, 13-14, and a subtler one in v17.

In the middle of these stories is 9:42-50 which seems to be a pivot around a better way than disputing and arguing, the idea of being willing to lose rather than cause someone else to stumble.

## MISSING VERSES

You might notice that verses 44 & 46 appear missing. When recent archaeological evidence suggests that an original text was different than a later manuscript the current versions of the bible will correct this and make a note in the footnotes accordingly. The printers of the bible are trying to be very transparent about what is happening. It is important to recognise that chapters and verses were added to the New Testament centuries after it was written to make navigation and study easier. Cardinal Stephen Langton introduced chapter divisions in the early 13th century, and French printer Robert Estienne added numbered verses in the mid-16th century.

**1207 – Chapter Divisions:** Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, created the modern chapter system. His structure was quickly adopted for Latin Vulgate manuscripts and eventually across all Bible translations.

**1551 – Verse Divisions:** French printer Robert Estienne (Stephanus) introduced standard verse numbers for the New Testament in his fourth edition Greek-Latin text. Legend suggests he numbered them while riding on horseback between Paris and Lyon.

**1560 – First Complete English Printing:** The Geneva Bible was published as the first English translation to feature both Langton's chapters and Estienne's verse divisions.

For more information read the articles in the resources on Day 17.

It was common in Jewish writing to use structure to make a point. Rather than following a Greek argument style which is very linear and builds one point on the next, the Jewish writer would use structure to point to a key idea in the middle of an argument. I think, not everyone will agree, that this is what is happening here. The stories of 9:14-29, 9:30-37 and 9:38-41 point forward and the stories of 10:1-12, 9:13-16, and 9:17-31 point back to the centre of the argument in 9:42-50.

Whether you agree or disagree is not the key issue, the point is to begin to look for how structure might be being used to make a greater point.

## Going Deeper



The video called 'What is a Chiastic Structure' available at [https://youtu.be/Ykaw5FG\\_elk](https://youtu.be/Ykaw5FG_elk) explains a writing structure form called a Chiasm. Understanding chiasms is interesting and can really enhance how you read the Scriptures.

## Day 24: The Way of the Jesus

### Bible Reading: Mark 10:32-11:11

#### *Jesus Predicts His Death a Third Time*

<sup>32</sup> They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. <sup>33</sup> "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, <sup>34</sup> who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."

### **The Request of James and John**

<sup>35</sup> Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask."

<sup>36</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked.

<sup>37</sup> They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."

<sup>38</sup> "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?"

<sup>39</sup> "We can," they answered.

Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."

<sup>41</sup> When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup> For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

### **Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight**

<sup>46</sup> Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the roadside begging. <sup>47</sup> When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

<sup>48</sup> Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

<sup>49</sup> Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." <sup>50</sup> Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

<sup>51</sup> "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

<sup>52</sup> "Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

### **Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King**

<sup>11</sup> As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. <sup>3</sup> If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.'"

<sup>4</sup> They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, <sup>5</sup> some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" <sup>6</sup> They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. <sup>7</sup> When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. <sup>8</sup> Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. <sup>9</sup> Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, "Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

<sup>10</sup> "Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

"Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

<sup>11</sup> Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

## **Heading towards Jerusalem**

The Gospel of Mark begins to head directly to the final days of Jesus and the events

that define his purpose. In line 3 of our commitment prayer, we highlight this key theme.

*Thank you, God our Creator, for inviting me into your family.*

*I believe Jesus is who He said He is: the Son of God from the beginning.*

*I believe Jesus was crucified and died for my sin. I believe You raised Him to life again to show he is your Son.*

*I commit to You as the Lord of my life, seeking to live as the Spirit guides and empowers me.*

*Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making me your child.*

In 10:32-34 Jesus predicts what will happen, but the disciples don't understand. The disciples grew up in the common Jewish expectation of a victorious military Messiah who would come and expel the evil Roman empire that was oppressing them, but Jesus has other ideas, he comes as a servant rather than as a military King.

The disconnect of the disciples can be seen in 10:35-45 where James and John want positions of power in Jesus' coming Kingdom rather than to emulate Jesus' servanthood.

In 10:46-52 we have a subtle allusion to the conquering Messiah idea when Bartimaeus calls out 'Jesus, Son of David'. David was the great King who people thought the Messiah would copy as a military King who reclaims his Kingdom with force.

Again, we see in 11:1-11 expectations of a David like king.

## Going Deeper



Check out the Biblehub.com article on Kingship in the bible at <https://biblehub.com/topical/k/king.htm>

## Day 25: Authority

### Bible Reading: Mark 11:12-33

#### **Jesus Curses a Fig Tree and Clears the Temple Courts**

<sup>12</sup> The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. <sup>13</sup> Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. <sup>14</sup> Then he said to the tree, "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." And his disciples heard him say it.

<sup>15</sup> On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, <sup>16</sup> and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. <sup>17</sup> And as he taught them, he said, "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

<sup>18</sup> The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

<sup>19</sup> When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

<sup>20</sup> In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots. <sup>21</sup> Peter remembered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!"

<sup>22</sup> "Have faith in God," Jesus answered. <sup>23</sup> "Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, 'Go, throw

yourself into the sea,' and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. <sup>24</sup> Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. <sup>25</sup> And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." [28] [29]

### **The Authority of Jesus Questioned**

<sup>27</sup> They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. <sup>28</sup> "By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked. "And who gave you authority to do this?"

<sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, "I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. <sup>30</sup> John's baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!"

<sup>31</sup> They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'" <sup>32</sup> But if we say, 'Of human origin' ..." (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

<sup>33</sup> So they answered Jesus, "We don't know."

Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."

## **Authority displayed**

In these two stories Jesus authority is displayed in ways we might struggle with and it's okay to struggle.

Sometimes people talk about faith as if it is switching off your brain rather than learning to trust even when unsure.

Why did Jesus curse the fig tree for not producing fruit when out of season in 10:12-13? Was Jesus being petulant? Is there something cultural about this I just don't understand?

Charles H. Spurgeon, a famous preacher, said of the bible: 'Defend the bible! I would as soon defend a lion!'

In the next story Jesus is asked to defend himself and instead he asks a question back. This I think is a pretty good principle when unsure or confused about something, ask a question back.

It's okay to ask questions. It's okay to be unsure. It's okay not to have everything tied up with a bow. The bigger issue is whether you are trusting God that in the fullness of time he is a good God and he always has and always will do the right thing even when it doesn't feel like that.

## **Going Deeper**



Spend time writing down or speaking out your struggles to God. If you are frustrated, angry, confused or hurt then tell him those things.

Read the following article to learn more about how to talk with God when things are difficult.

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/learning-to-lament-a-guide-to-praying-in-our-hardest-moments/>

## **Day 26: Challenges**

### **Bible Reading: Mark 12:1-44**

### **The Parable of the Tenants**

**12** Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: "A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. **2** At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. **3** But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. **4** Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. **5** He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed. **6** "He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, 'They will respect my son.'

**7** "But the tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir. Come, let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' **8** So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

**9** "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. **10** Haven't you read this passage of Scripture:

"The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;

**11** the Lord has done this,  
and it is marvellous in our eyes?"

**12** Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

### **Paying the Imperial Tax to Caesar**

**13** Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. **14** They came to him and said, "Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? **15** Should we pay or shouldn't we?" But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. "Why are you trying to trap me?" he asked. "Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." **16** They brought the coin, and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?"

"Caesar's," they replied.

**17** Then Jesus said to them, "Give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." And they were amazed at him.

### **Marriage at the Resurrection**

**18** Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. **19** "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. **20** Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. **21** The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. **22** In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. **23** At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

**24** Jesus replied, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? **25** When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. **26** Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? **27** He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

### **The Greatest Commandment**

**28** One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

**29** "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **30** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with

all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

<sup>32</sup> "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. <sup>33</sup> To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

<sup>34</sup> When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

### **Whose Son Is the Messiah?**

<sup>35</sup> While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, "Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David?" <sup>36</sup> David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared:

"The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand  
until I put your enemies  
under your feet."

<sup>37</sup> David himself calls him 'Lord.' How then can he be his son?"

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

### **Warning Against the Teachers of the Law**

<sup>38</sup> As he taught, Jesus said, "Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, <sup>39</sup> and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honour at banquets. <sup>40</sup> They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely."

### **The Widow's Offering**

<sup>41</sup> Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. <sup>42</sup> But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

<sup>43</sup> Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. <sup>44</sup> They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

## **Things are heating up**

As events move toward the cross the author of Mark collates together challenges to Jesus. In 12:1-12, especially v12, we see the chief priests, teachers of the law and elders looking for ways to arrest Jesus, in 12:13-17 the Pharisees and Herodians are trying to trick Jesus up with difficult questions, in 12:18-27 the Sadducees are trying the theological route and then in 12:28-34 we find a teacher of the law tries a question that gets to the heart of Judaism and finally it seems a leader seems to get the point. But almost immediately someone else in 12:35-37 has a David related puzzle. In all of this it seems we have the establishment on one side protecting their turf while on the other side the crowds (12:37) watch on with delight at the antics having not yet really decided whose side they are on.

Then Mark adds in a simple little story about a widow (12:41-44) to remind us that it's really about the heart rather than answers that tickle the intellect. The simple heartfelt giving of a poor woman is worth more than all the wealth and theological correctness of the rich and intelligent.

## **Going Deeper**



One of my favourite authors is Tony Campolo and this video is him telling a story that speaks of God's heart.

[https://youtu.be/DRBM\\_YY\\_YX0](https://youtu.be/DRBM_YY_YX0)

## Day 27: Time to get advice

### Bible Reading: Mark 13:1-37

#### ***The Destruction of the Temple and Signs of the End Times***

**13** As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"

**2** "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

**3** As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, **4** "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

**5** Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. **6** Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. **7** When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. **8** Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

**9** "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. **10** And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. **11** Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

**12** "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. **13** Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

**14** "When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. **15** Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. **16** Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. **17** How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! **18** Pray that this will not take place in winter, **19** because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equalled again.

**20** "If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. **21** At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. **22** For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. **23** So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

**24** "But in those days, following that distress, "the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;

**25** the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

**26** "At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. **27** And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of

the heavens.

<sup>28</sup> "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. <sup>30</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. <sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

### **The Day and Hour Unknown**

<sup>32</sup> "But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

<sup>35</sup> "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <sup>36</sup> If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup> What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'"

## **Difficult Passages**

As a general rule you should read and reflect on the bible passage before looking up any resources. In most cases a bit of common sense and guidance from the Holy Spirit will lead you to the key ideas of the passage.

For some passages, such as this one, it is likely you will need additional insight to understand what is being said which is when it can be helpful to go to a resource like Biblehub.com and read what commentaries say about the passage.

When looking to understand a passage like this read slowly and look for clues in the text about what is being said. For example, this passage is Jesus speaking to Peter, James, John and Andrew (10:3) in private and so the 'you' in 13:5 and other following passages is likely to be to the disciples during their lifetime rather than about future generations. Understanding the passage in the present experience of these disciples guides you to how the events might occur. In this situation the 'all nations' in 13:10 if possible, a reference to the nations known at that time, rather than all the nations of the entire world.

One important lesson from this section of the bible is found in 13:32 which tells us that no one except the father knows the timing of some of these events. If you hear someone explaining a dating for Jesus returning you should be very wary about what they are teaching as the bible explicitly tells us here that they can't know the timing. Instead, we need to live our lives in such a way that it doesn't matter when Jesus returns as taught in 13:35.

## **Going Deeper**

Check out the commentaries on Mark 13 at Biblehub.com



#### Instructions:

1. Go to biblehub.com
2. Go to dropdown menu and select 'Mark'
3. Go to dropdown menu and select '13'
4. Select 'Commentaries' OR one of the selections from the commentaries list.
5. If you choose 'Commentaries' you will be able to see all the different commentaries.

## Day 28: Responses during final days

### Bible Reading: Mark 14:1-72

#### Jesus Anointed at Bethany

**14** Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. <sup>2</sup> But not during the festival," they said, "or the people may riot."

<sup>3</sup> While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

<sup>4</sup> Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? <sup>5</sup> It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

<sup>6</sup> "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. <sup>7</sup> The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup> She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. <sup>9</sup> Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

<sup>10</sup> Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. <sup>11</sup> They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

#### The Last Supper

**12** On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

<sup>13</sup> So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. <sup>14</sup> Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' <sup>15</sup> He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

<sup>16</sup> The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

<sup>17</sup> When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup> While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

<sup>19</sup> They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"

<sup>20</sup> "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup> The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

<sup>22</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."

<sup>23</sup> Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

<sup>24</sup> "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup> "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

<sup>26</sup> When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

### **Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial**

<sup>27</sup> "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,  
and the sheep will be scattered."

<sup>28</sup> But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

<sup>29</sup> Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."

<sup>30</sup> "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."

<sup>31</sup> But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same.

### **Gethsemane**

<sup>32</sup> They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." <sup>33</sup> He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. <sup>34</sup> "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," he said to them. "Stay here and keep watch."

<sup>35</sup> Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. <sup>36</sup> "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

<sup>37</sup> Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

<sup>39</sup> Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. <sup>40</sup> When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

<sup>41</sup> Returning the third time, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!"

### **Jesus Arrested**

<sup>43</sup> Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

<sup>44</sup> Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." <sup>45</sup> Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Rabbi!" and kissed him. <sup>46</sup> The men seized Jesus and arrested him. <sup>47</sup> Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

<sup>48</sup> "Am I leading a rebellion," said Jesus, "that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?"

<sup>49</sup> Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." <sup>50</sup> Then everyone deserted him and fled.

<sup>51</sup> A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, <sup>52</sup> he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

### **Jesus Before the Sanhedrin**

<sup>53</sup> They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law

came together. <sup>54</sup> Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

<sup>55</sup> The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. <sup>56</sup> Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

<sup>57</sup> Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: <sup>58</sup> "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.'" <sup>59</sup> Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

<sup>60</sup> Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" <sup>61</sup> But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"

<sup>62</sup> "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

<sup>63</sup> The high priest tore his clothes. "Why do we need any more witnesses?" he asked. <sup>64</sup> "You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

They all condemned him as worthy of death. <sup>65</sup> Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, "Prophesy!" And the guards took him and beat him.

### **Peter Disowns Jesus**

<sup>66</sup> While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. <sup>67</sup> When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him.

"You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus," she said.

<sup>68</sup> But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway<sup>1</sup>

<sup>69</sup> When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, "This fellow is one of them." <sup>70</sup> Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean."

<sup>71</sup> He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

<sup>72</sup> Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times." And he broke down and wept.

## **Be aware**

Have you ever watched a movie or a newscast and wondered how you might respond in a particular situation? Like watching a documentary of the 2nd World War and wondered if you would have stood up for your Jewish neighbour in the face of Nazi barbarism!

Here we have a collection of responses to Jesus that challenge us about our response to Jesus under pressure.

In 14:3-9 we have a woman pour expensive perfume on the head of Jesus as an act of adoration at the same time as the Jewish leaders are planning (14:1-2) how to kill him. Judas, who had walked with Jesus for three years, decides to betray him (14:10-11, 17-21). Then Jesus predicts (14:27-31) that the disciples all will fall away despite Peter's protestations that he will be faithful. Jesus then goes out to pray (14:32-42) and his key disciples can't even stay away and support him. Judas then actually betrays him (14:43-47) and his disciples run away (14:48-53). Jesus then comes up before the Jewish leaders (14:53-65) who condemn, spit on and beat him. Peter then disowns Jesus (14:66-70).

Rejection, rejection and more rejection, except, did you notice, except by a woman. As an aside it is interesting to note that all through the gospels you have little hidden nuggets of the faithfulness of the woman in Jesus circle. (For just a couple of examples in Mark see also 12:42, 14:9.)

## Going Deeper



For a lesson on faithful women in the New Testament check out <https://www.logos.com/grow/women-new-testament/>

## Day 29: Borrowing from culture

### Bible Reading: Mark 15:1-47

#### **Jesus Before Pilate**

*15 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.*

*2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.*

*"You have said so," Jesus replied.*

*3 The chief priests accused him of many things. 4 So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."*

*5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.*

*6 Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7 A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8 The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.*

*9 "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.*

*12 "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.*

*13 "Crucify him!" they shouted.*

*14 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.*

*But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"*

*15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.*

#### **The Soldiers Mock Jesus**

*16 The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. 17 They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. 18 And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" 19 Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.*

#### **The Crucifixion of Jesus**

*21 A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross. 22 They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means "the place of the skull"). 23 Then they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. 24 And they crucified him. Dividing up his clothes, they cast lots to see what each would*

get.

<sup>25</sup> It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. <sup>26</sup> The written notice of the charge against him read: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

<sup>27</sup> They crucified two rebels with him, one on his right and one on his left. [<sup>28</sup>] <sup>29</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, <sup>30</sup> come down from the cross and save yourself!" <sup>31</sup> In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! <sup>32</sup> Let this Messiah, this king of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him.

### **The Death of Jesus**

<sup>33</sup> At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. <sup>34</sup> And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

<sup>35</sup> When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."

<sup>36</sup> Someone ran, filled a sponge with wine vinegar, put it on a staff, and offered it to Jesus to drink. "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to take him down," he said.

<sup>37</sup> With a loud cry, Jesus breathed his last.

<sup>38</sup> The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. <sup>39</sup> And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

<sup>40</sup> Some women were watching from a distance.

Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome. <sup>41</sup> In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

### **The Burial of Jesus**

<sup>42</sup> It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. <sup>46</sup> So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. <sup>47</sup> Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

## **A particularly Roman Gospel**

Each of the gospels is written to a different audience. There is debate, as there always is about these things, but I appreciate the perspective of Marty Solomon from <https://www.bemadiscipleship.com/> which I have summarised in the table below.

### **ROMAN WORSHIP**

Rome was okay with people worshipping their own Gods if they ALSO sacrificed and worshipped the emperor. Jews and Christians were persecuted and executed because they were unwilling to add the worship of the emperor alongside their worship of the ONE God.

Mark: Who is best ruler of your life?

### **JESUS IS KING AND LORD**



### **CAESAR IS KING AND LORD**



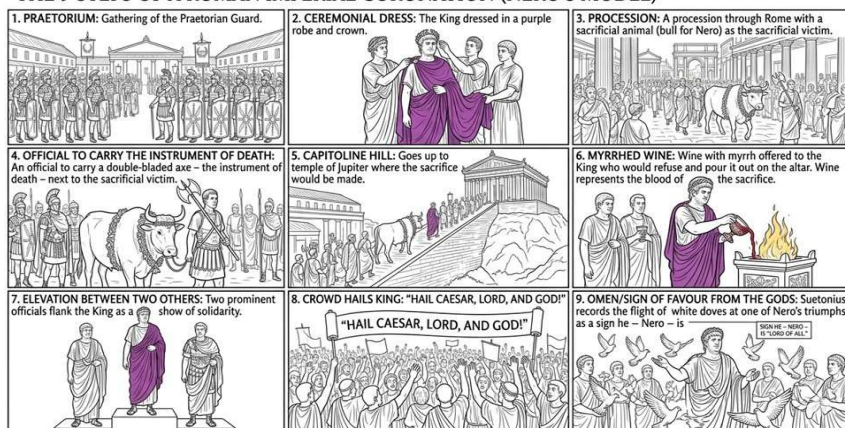
| Purpose of the '4' Gospels |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                       |                                                                |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Gospel:                    | Matthew                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Mark                                                                                                                                                                        | Luke                                                                                                                                  | John                                                           |
| Author:                    | Matthew                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Mark                                                                                                                                                                        | Luke                                                                                                                                  | John                                                           |
| Author's background :      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disenfranchised Jew</li> <li>Tax Collector</li> <li>Apostle</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jew</li> <li>Cousin of Barnabas</li> <li>Travelled with Paul</li> <li>2nd generation Christian</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gentile proselyte → Jew</li> <li>Possible ex-Asclepeion Priest (medical)</li> </ul>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apostle John</li> </ul> |
| Audience:                  | Outsider Jews                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Gentiles likely in Rome                                                                                                                                                     | Orderly account for Synagogue Attendees                                                                                               | Hellenistic Jews & Greeks in Asia Minor.                       |
| Key Theme:                 | <b>Outsiders:</b><br>Jesus is good news for those on the outside.                                                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Romans:</b><br>Jesus is good news for Romans – a better King.                                                                                                            | <b>Insiders:</b><br>Jesus is good news for the religious observant.                                                                   | <b>Blended:</b><br>Jesus is the true God.                      |
| Examples from the gospel   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Women in the Genealogy 1:1-6<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Magi from the East 2:1-12<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pharisees & Sadducees 3:7-10<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leper, Centurion, etc 8ff | 'Immediately' used in 1:30; 1:42; 2:8; 5:29; 5:42; 6:27; 6:45; 6:50; 9:20; 9:24; 10:52; 14:72<br><br>'Coronation' of Jesus as a better king than the Emperor. Mark 15:16-39 | Luke is likely a Christian companion to the 'parasha' Synagogue reading.<br><br>Parasha reading is reading through Torah once a year. | Who is God? John 1:1<br><br>7 'I Am' statements                |

Notice for our purpose that the Gospel of Mark is written to Gentiles (non-Jews) in Rome speaking about Jesus as a better King, that is better than the emperor who was known as the King of King and Lord of Lords.

For our purpose here I would like to note how Mark alludes to practices in Roman culture. This is one of the things that as you learn about the bible and bible times that will bring new depth to what you read.

In the following diagram you can see the normal 9 steps of a coronation of a Roman Emperor.

#### THE 9 STEPS OF A ROMAN IMPERIAL CORONATION (NERO'S MODEL)



Now notice how in Mark he uses this Roman practice to speak about the death of

Jesus. Mark is communicating truth to the Gentiles of Rome in cultural terms they would understand.

| Emperor Coronation (9 common steps) e.g. Nero in 54ad |                                                                                                                                  |                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Coronation Step                                       |                                                                                                                                  | Mark                       |
| 1. Praetorium                                         | • Gathering of the Praetorian Guard.                                                                                             | 15:16                      |
| 2. Ceremonial Dress                                   | • The King dressed in a purple robe and crown.                                                                                   | 15:17-18                   |
| 3. Procession                                         | • A procession through Rome with a sacrificial animal (bull for Nero) as the sacrificial victim.                                 | 15:20                      |
| 4. Official carry the instrument of death             | • An official to carry a double-bladed axe – the instrument of death – next to the sacrificial victim                            | 15:21                      |
| 5. Capitoline Hill                                    | • Goes up to temple of Jupiter where the sacrifice would be made                                                                 | 15:22                      |
| 6. Myrrid Wine                                        | • Wine with myrrh offered to the King who would refuse and pour it out on the altar. Wine represents the blood of the sacrifice. | 15:23                      |
| 7. Elevation between two others                       | • Two prominent officials flank the King as a show of solidarity.                                                                | 15:27                      |
| 8. Crowd hails King                                   | • “Hail Caesar, Lord, and god!”                                                                                                  | 15:29-32<br>(anti-triumph) |
| 9. Omen/Sign of favour from the gods                  | • Suetonius records the flight of white doves at one of Nero’s triumphs as a sign he – Nero – is “Lord of all.”                  | 15:38-39                   |

## Going Deeper



Check out ‘The purpose of the Gospel of Mark’ by Pastor Peter Watson at <https://youtu.be/XiYzvlplj5s> as referenced in the content above.

## Day 30: Jesus Has Risen

### Bible Reading: Mark 16:1-8

#### *Jesus Has Risen*

*16 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. <sup>2</sup>Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb <sup>3</sup>and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"*

*<sup>4</sup>But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. <sup>5</sup>As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*

*<sup>6</sup>"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"*

*<sup>8</sup>Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

### The Climax!

Mark ends his Gospel like all the others (see Matthew 28, Luke 24, John 20) with the

risen Jesus but does in a shorter and more abrupt way for I think a couple of reasons.

Mark is seeking to subvert Roman views of authority and power. He is representing Jesus as 'The better King' and so he does two things.

Firstly, he highlights women as the first witnesses of these events. This is subversive given the role of women in that day. Throughout the records of the early church this is a common theme, those who have little power are recognised and lifted up. Paul writes in *Galatians 3:28* *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Secondly, he ends his gospel (see side note about Mark 16:9-20) with the first witnesses afraid and bewildered. Why?

Mark is speaking to gentile Christians in Rome, the seat of imperial power, who must choose between Jesus as Lord or the Emperor as Lord. This might have life and death consequences as rejecting the Lordship of the Emperor could result in being executed for not worshipping the emperor.

Mark ends his Gospel with this question hanging: 'You are afraid, but whom will you trust?'

## Going Deeper

Where are you at with the Commitment Prayer, especially the fourth sentence which includes 'I commit to You as the Lord of my life'.

*Thank you, God our Creator, for inviting me into your family.*

*I believe Jesus is who He said He is: the Son of God from the beginning.*

*I believe Jesus was crucified and died for my sin. I believe You raised Him to life again to show he is your Son.*

*I commit to You as the Lord of my life, seeking to live as the Spirit guides and empowers me.*

*Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making me your child.*

## Day 31: The Commission

In the above study I mentioned that Mark 16:9-20 was not part of the earliest manuscripts. It does however have an important section that is found in the other synoptic gospels. Here is the section found in each of the synoptic gospels.

### Bible Readings:

| <b>Matthew 28:18-20</b>                                    | <b>Mark 16:15-16</b>                               | <b>Luke 24:44-49</b>                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in</i> | <i>He said to them, "Go into all the world and</i> | <i>He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled</i> |

### SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels ("seeing together") because they share remarkably similar narratives, structures, and phrasing when recounting the life of Jesus. The Gospel of John has a different style than the Synoptic Gospels.

### MARK 16:9-20

I have not included Mark 16:9-20 because most Bibles this section in brackets, italics, or explanatory footnotes. They do this because these verses are missing from the earliest and most reliable ancient manuscripts, signalling that they were likely added by later scribes.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>heaven and on earth has been given to me.<sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”</p> | <p>preach the gospel to all creation.<sup>16</sup> Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.</p> | <p>that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”<br/> <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. <sup>46</sup> He told them, “This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,<sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

## Blessed to be a blessing

An original call to the people of God can be found in Genesis 12:2 which is often summarised in the phrase ‘Blessed to be a blessing’.

*“I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.*

The people of God have always been called to be a blessing to the world they live in. The Great Commission continues this tradition within the context of the life of Jesus. The components of the commission are:

- Go
- Make Disciples - Paul expresses this in 1 Corinthians 11:1 *Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*
- Baptise
- Teach to obey

This commission is to every Christian, and it comes with God’s empowering of the Holy Spirit.

## Going Deeper

Review the list of ‘Helpful Resources’ section at the beginning of this booklet and pick one to explore more.

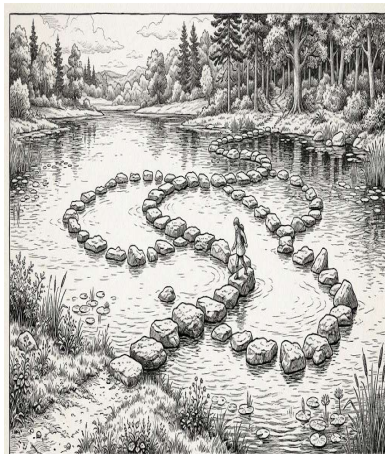
## What Next: Make a personal next steps plan

The studies on Mark have finished but continuing to deepen your experience of God is a lifetime journey, the best of all journeys. I think of this journey like getting across a pond but with multiple different ways of getting across. I encourage you to plan for your next steps from here.

Here are some more ideas and resources you might find helpful as you consider what next:

1. Find a mentor and ask to work through one of these resources together
  - Introductory Bible Reading Plan
  - Experiencing God by Henry Blackaby

- The Gospel of Being Human by Marty Solomon
  - Bema Discipleship
  - Sacred Pathways by Gary Thomas
  - The Pursuit of God by A.W. Tozer
  - No More Boring Bible Study by Faith Womack
  - Confronting Jesus or Confronting Christianity by Rebecca McLaughlin
  - How to Talk About Jesus by Sam Chan
  - Born Again This Way by Rachel Gilson (On same-sex attraction.)
2. Get baptised. Refer to the resources in the Day 2 study.
  3. Join a home group. You can find a list at <https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/connect/>
  4. Check out some the following resources:



|                                                                                    |                                                                                                              |                                                                                    |                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|   | How do I pray? (5:33)<br><a href="https://youtu.be/vsW_Y0nXtL8">https://youtu.be/vsW_Y0nXtL8</a>             |   | How to spend time with God (2:06)<br><a href="https://youtu.be/ilOCxp48nTM">https://youtu.be/ilOCxp48nTM</a>             |
|  | How do I study the bible? (10:29)<br><a href="https://youtu.be/irTa0WDqNcs">https://youtu.be/irTa0WDqNcs</a> |  | How do I read the bible in one year? (4:58)<br><a href="https://youtu.be/5JXFo uteQ68">https://youtu.be/5JXFo uteQ68</a> |

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | This short booklet by John Whittaker will help you get a better and deeper appreciation for understanding the bible is available at <a href="https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Bible-in-Life-ebook.pdf">https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Bible-in-Life-ebook.pdf</a>              |
|  | An introductory bible reading plan can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of this booklet or you can download a copy from <a href="https://www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Bible-Reading-Introductory-Plan.pdf">www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/Bible-Reading-Introductory-Plan.pdf</a> |

|                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>Or go to somewhere like<br/> <a href="https://www.navigators.org/resource/bible-reading-plans/">https://www.navigators.org/resource/bible-reading-plans/</a> which have some excellent bible reading plans.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|  | <p>Here's a bible reading plan that goes through the bible in Chronological order. I encourage you to start with the New Testament (from day 274) before tackling the Old Testament (from day 1). Since this bible reading plan covers the whole bible in a year you might spread each day over a few days if that seems more achievable.</p> <p><a href="https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/1Yr_ChronologicalPlan.pdf">https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/1Yr_ChronologicalPlan.pdf</a></p> |

## Going Deeper

Spend some time sitting with God and seeking to hear what he is telling you is your next step in your journey with him. What is the next step for you?

# Appendix 1: Introductory Bible Reading Plan

The following bible sections will introduce you to the key message & characters of the bible. A FREE bible is available from the church foyer, or you can read online at [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) or use an app like YouVersion Bible.

HOW TO FIND A PASSAGE: The first reading is from Luke 1-2. 'Luke' is the name of the book of the bible. '1-2' refers to chapters 1 and 2. In a paper bible you will find the 'books' listed on the contents page. If using an online bible, you simply type in the book and the chapter you are looking for.

|                                                   |                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Luke 1-2 - The Birth of Jesus                     | Genesis 1:1-3:19 - Creation and the Fall          |
| John 1:1-18 - The Identity of Jesus               | Genesis 12, 15, 17, 21-22 - Abraham               |
| Luke 4:14-44 - Jesus Begins His Ministry          | Genesis 24-25, 27, 32-33, Isaac & Jacob           |
| Matthew 5-6 - What Jesus Taught                   | Genesis 37, 39, 41-47 - Joseph                    |
| John 3 - God's Love for the World                 | Exodus 1-6 - The Call of Moses                    |
| John 5 - Jesus' Miracles & Authority              | Exodus 7-14 - Moses & Pharaoh                     |
| John 11 - Jesus' Power over Death                 | Exodus 20 - God's Law                             |
| John 15 - Staying Connected to Jesus              | Joshua 1, Judges 1-2 - Cycles of Obedience to God |
| Matthew 26-27 - Arrest & Crucifixion of Jesus     | 1 Samuel 7-9, 15-17 - The Rise & Fall of Saul     |
| John 20, Luke 24 - Jesus Rises from the Dead      | 2 Samuel 5, 7-9, 11-12 - Stories of David's Life  |
| Acts 2 - The Coming of the Holy Spirit            | 1 Kings 2-3, 6, 11 - Solomon's Reign              |
| Acts 9, 16-19 - The Conversion & Ministry of Paul | 1 Kings 11:9-14:31 - Dividing of the Kingdom      |
| Acts 26 - Paul's story & Defence of Christianity  | 1 Kings 17-19, 2 Kings 2,4 - Elijah & Elisha      |
| Romans 3 - Justification by Faith Alone           | Job 1-2, 38-42 - God's Hand In Suffering          |
| Romans 7-8 - Battle with Sin & Life in the Spirit | Psalms 1, 23, 139 - Introduction to Psalms        |
| Corinthians 13 - The Way of Love                  | Psalms 22, 38, 51 - Psalms for Suffering & Sin    |
| Ephesians 4 - Unity In Christ                     | Proverbs 3, 5, 7, 16, 31 - Following Wisdom       |
| Ephesians 5 - The Walk of A Christian             | Jeremiah 11-12, 31:31-40 - The New Covenant       |
| Ephesians 6 - The Armor of God                    | Jeremiah 23:1-6; Isaiah 9:6-7; 53 - Messiah       |
| Philippians 1:18-2:18 - Christ's Example          | Jonah 1-4 - The Story of Jonah                    |
| Colossians 3:1-17 - Putting on the New Self       | Daniel 1-3 - The Exile in Babylon                 |
| Hebrews 4:14-5:10 - Jesus the Great High Priest   | Daniel 4-6 - The Story of Daniel                  |
| James 1, 1 Peter 1 - Pure religion                | Nehemiah 1-2, 8-9 - Return of God's People        |
| 1 John 4:7-21 - God is Love                       | Esther 1-8 - Esther, Faithful in Exile            |
| Revelation 21-22 - The New Heavens & Earth        | Malachi 1-4 - Final Words of the Old Testament    |

## Appendix 2: 5W Devotions

Treat the following like elements in smorgasbord meal where you can pick & choose different elements depending on how you sense to spend time with God today.

### WELCOME

Grace-filled **WELCOME**: Where everyone is welcome.

#### **Silence:**

“Be still & know that I am God.” (Ps 46:10)

Spend some time in silence. It might be helpful to:

- Set a maximum (not a goal) time e.g. 1, 5, 10 minutes so that you can relax and enjoy the time of silence.
- Nasal breathing to calm the body.
- Notice what you can hear.
- Notice what you can feel.
- If you get distracted notice the distraction, for example ‘I notice I am thinking about xyz’ and then use a bible verse like Ps 46:10 to bring yourself back to the silence.

#### **Welcome:**

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” (Eph 2:8)

Thank God for his grace-filled welcome.

#### **Commitment Prayer:**

Thank you, God our Creator, for inviting me into your family.

I believe Jesus is who He said He is: the Son of God from the beginning.

I believe Jesus was crucified and died for my sin.

I believe You raised Him to life again to show he is your Son.

I commit to You as the Lord of my life, seeking to live as the Spirit guides and empowers me.

Thank you, Heavenly Father, for making me your child.

### WORSHIP

Awe-struck **WORSHIP**: Honouring God in his rightful place.

#### **Psalm:**

“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. (Psalm 95:6)

Spend time meditating on a Psalm

#### **Sing a song**

“... speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord ...” (Eph 5:19)

You may find it helpful to use the ‘Worship Music’ playlist on the church YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/@IllawarraChurchofChrist/playlists](http://www.youtube.com/@IllawarraChurchofChrist/playlists)

## WONDER

Joy-filled **WONDER**: Sharing stories of what God is doing.

### **Reflect:**

"They tell of the power of your awesome works— and I will proclaim your great deeds." (Psalm 145:6)

Think about your recent past e.g. like the last 24 hours and notice what you can be grateful for. It can be helpful to say these out loud or write them down using this framework. "I am grateful for ... because ...".

Here are some categories that can help you reflect:

- Faith, Family, Finances, Fitness / health, Friends, Fun – things you enjoy, Future – looking for to ...
- Or you can think of things that start with the letters of the alphabet and thank God for them. Thankyou God for A = Air, B = Breath, C .... etc.

## WORD

Life-transforming **WORD**: Discovering God's truth.

### **Bible:**

"Open my eyes to see wonderful things in your Word." (Psalm 119:18)

- Spend some time reading or listening or watching some of the bible. You can use a physical bible, a bible app like YouVersion<sup>1</sup> or an online bible like The Bible Hub<sup>2</sup>, Bible Gateway<sup>3</sup>, or Net Bible<sup>4</sup>.
- It can be helpful to use a bible reading plan like the one in our monthly newsletter<sup>5</sup> those available from Navigators<sup>6</sup> or focus on one book of the bible for an extended period.
- When you read the bible, it can be helpful to 'write down questions' as you read. For example, you might ask:
  - Who is writing this and why?
  - When was it written? What is the context of this book?
  - What point is the author making?
  - What other parts of the bible talk about this same idea?
  - How does this idea fit into the whole story of the bible? Check out [www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/how-do-i-understand-the-bible/](http://www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/how-do-i-understand-the-bible/)
  - etc

### **Meditate / Reflect**

Spend time specifically reflecting and meditating on what you have just read. Ask God to reveal his truth to you.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youversion.com/bible-app>

<sup>2</sup> <https://biblehub.com/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.biblegateway.com/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://netbible.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/resources/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.navigators.org/resource/bible-reading-plans/>

Write down the impressions, thoughts, directions you receive.

### ***Spiritual Books / Podcasts / YouTube Channels:***

Reading Christian biographies, commentaries or Christian books on key themes. You can find a list of books I recommend at [www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/recommended-resources/](http://www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/recommended-resources/)

## **Works**

Kingdom-building **WORKS**: Building God's abundant Kingdom.

"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

### ***Application:***

Consider how you might act based on what you have read, thought, felt. Consider each of these areas:

- Inward Prayer<sup>7</sup>: Talk to God about your personal needs.
- Inward Action: Consider what actions you could be taking to grow in your relationship with God, Self & Others.
- Outward Prayer: Talk to God about the needs of those in your life. We are called to pray for our family, our church family, for those who don't yet know God, for those who are sick, poor, in need, and for our leaders both in the church and in the community.
- Outward Action: Consider what actions you should be taking regarding your family, church, community. Use this checklist to consider how you might be being asked to do more or less:
  - How am I being asked to use my time?
  - How am I being asked to use my talents (skills, gifts, abilities)?
  - How am I being asked to use my treasure (money / resources)?

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

You may find it helpful to slowly pray the Lord's prayer and consider how you might respond to each line.

Our Father in heaven  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and forever. Amen.

For a sermon on this topic go to [www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/messages/](http://www.illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/messages/) and look for 19 July 2026.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://illawarrachurchofchrist.com.au/prayer-resources/>



