

# The Crown and The Cross

A Study of Mark's Gospel

**Part II: Mark 9-16**

A resource of Parkview Church  
Iowa City, Iowa  
*parkviewchurch.org*

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# INTRODUCTION

**Mark 9-16**

## Intermission

If you have spent much time in the Iowa City area, then you know of the vibrant history of theatrical productions that have taken place at Hancher Auditorium. One key difference between a movie theatre production and what you'll find at Hancher is the brief intermission that comes between the two acts, when theatre-goers exit to the lobby for a refreshment and discuss the performance while the performers take a quick break. In our study of the book of Mark, we find ourselves in a similar intermission, between the two 'acts' as we have taken a break to focus on the first coming of Christ during the Advent season. But the house lights are flashing, and it is time to pick up where we left off.

## Where were we?

Every good playwright ends their first act with a bang so that the audience heads into the intermission buzzing with excitement, wondering what's next. Perhaps they learned this from the Gospel writer Mark. In the Gospel of Mark, the big shock comes when one of Jesus' disciples finally figures out part of the identity that his actions have been making clear the whole time:

*“And he [Jesus] asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” (Mk 8:27 ESV)*

Peter's response brings to a climax the question that has permeated the first 8 chapters of Mark: “Who is this wandering Rabbi who is doing and saying these amazing things?” Peter, the preeminent follower of Jesus, makes this

confession after eight grueling chapters of misunderstanding and misidentification. The demons recognize Jesus from the beginning (see 1:24; 5:7), yet he is rejected by his hometown (6:1-6), the religious leaders (3:1-6) and even his own family (3:21; 3:31-35).

Mark began his Gospel by giving his audience the ultimate clue to this riddle in verse one of chapter one:

*“The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”*  
(Mk 1:1 ESV)

The great paradox of this statement is that throughout Mark’s sixteen chapters, no one will ever call Jesus by his full title as it is listed here. Jesus is the Christ; the anointed Savior sent to rescue God’s people. And Jesus is God’s own Son; the divine God-Man. The question that Mark seems to be inviting, even daring the reader to answer, is “Can you properly identify Jesus?” We have titled Mark’s two acts like this:

**Act I: The Crown**  
**Act II: The Cross**

It would be tempting to think that Peter is being held up as an example to us, showing us what real faith looks like. But that’s not the whole story, as his rebuke of Jesus in the following account demonstrates. Peter may have recognized *half* of Jesus’ identity (Jesus [the] **Christ**, Son of God; see Mk 1:1 above) but it would take a voice from heaven to supply what he missed. Indeed, immediately following this episode, Mark ends his first act with a tantalizing statement on the lips of Jesus:

*“Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”* (Mk 9:1 ESV)

Leaving his audience to wonder, what could this mean? Who is he talking about?

Mark doesn't leave his readers waiting for long, as he then immediately launches into the story of the transfiguration, where Jesus leads His closest disciples up onto a mountain, where His divine glory is revealed, with God's voice from heaven proclaiming

*"This is my beloved Son; listen to him."* (Mk 9:7 ESV)

It is this 'full confession' with the first half (**Christ**) supplied by Peter in 8:27 and the second half (**Son of God**) supplied by God in 9:7 that form a double hinge between the first and second 'Acts' of Mark's Gospel.

| Verse(s) | Speaker/Content  | Title                    | Audience              |
|----------|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1:1      | Mark the evangelistic narrator   | [the] Christ, Son of God | Mark's readers        |
| 8:29     | Peter the Disciple   | Christ                   | Jesus & His disciples |
| 8:30-38  | Jesus instructs His disciples about His forthcoming death and resurrection |                          |                       |
| 9:7      | God the Father   | Son [of God]             | Peter, James & John   |

What is Mark doing? And what should we expect from his second 'act' (9:2-16:8)? The material that comes between these two confessions gives us the answer. One of, if not the most pressing question facing the Christians for whom Mark composed his Gospel was this:

"If Jesus is God's chosen one, why did He die such a disgraceful death?"

In our time, the message of the cross is at risk of becoming mundane. When we think of the cross, we immediately think of Jesus' atoning sacrifice. But for Mark's audience, the shame of public execution and the glory of God's Messianic Son were **completely incompatible**. How does Mark seek to give a defense for his crucified King? The hinge between these two 'confessions' and especially the intervening teaching by Jesus are the prelude to the conclusion of Mark's Gospel. What is the message we see there? Jesus summarizes it well in 8:31:

*"And he began to teach them that the Son of Man [Jesus] must suffer..."* (Mk 8:31a ESV)

Mark's second act is the conclusion to his defense of a crucified Messiah; demonstrating that Jesus' suffering and death, rather than *detracting* from His heavenly credentials that He established in chapters 1-8, are the ultimate validation of His identity. To be the Messiah, the Son of God, *it is necessary* to suffer. Jesus' suffering and death, rather than preventing his revolution, only launched it. This is the story that Mark's has invited us to enter. Will you join Jesus' revolution by studying with us and following Him in the way of suffering?

# WEEK ONE

## STUDY ONE

Mark 9:1-29

### Pause & Pray

Before we launch back into our study of God's word, it seems right to pause and rejoice in the gift of Jesus, and ask God for his indispensable grace in our reading of his word. Without his illuminating presence, we would never be able to comprehend his word.

Let's begin our study of the second 'act' of Mark's Gospel by remembering the Apostle Paul's great prayer for the Church in Ephesus, meditating on it and praying it to God.

*Ephesians 1:15-23 (ESV)*

<sup>15</sup>For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, <sup>16</sup>I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup>that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup>having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup>that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

May we exalt in this glorious King as we read the Good News of His Kingdom in Mark's Gospel over the next 11 weeks!

## Read

Today's passage is **Mark 9:1-29**. Read through this passage once, and revisit the previous passage (Mk 8:31-38) if it helps to recall the details of the story being told.

*Mark 9:1-29 (ESV)*

<sup>1</sup>And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power."

<sup>2</sup>And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup>and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>And Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup>And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." <sup>8</sup>And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

<sup>9</sup>And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. <sup>10</sup>So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. <sup>11</sup>And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" <sup>12</sup>And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? <sup>13</sup>But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."

<sup>14</sup>And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. <sup>15</sup>And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. <sup>16</sup>And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" <sup>17</sup>And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. <sup>18</sup>And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds

his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.”<sup>19</sup> And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.”<sup>20</sup> And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth.<sup>21</sup> And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood.”<sup>22</sup> And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.”<sup>23</sup> And Jesus said to him, “‘If you can!’ All things are possible for one who believes.”<sup>24</sup> Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!”<sup>25</sup> And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”<sup>26</sup> And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.”<sup>27</sup> But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.<sup>28</sup> And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?”<sup>29</sup> And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”

## Study

What are some things that this passage teaches us about Jesus’ identity and character? Spend a few minutes investigating and then write down a few possibilities below, starting each phrase with “Jesus is...”

Now, look again at each statement you wrote and circle the place in the passage that led you to each tentative conclusion. Did you have to modify or abandon any of your conclusions through this process?



You might notice from the way that the passage breaks down into paragraphs above that this passage forms four sections. The first section is just verse 1, which probably belongs with the previous passage but also gives us a really helpful bridge from Act I (chapters 1-8) to Act II (chapters 9-16). Using the passage above, draw a box around the **first** and **last** verse of each section. (Just circle all of verse 1)

As mentioned previously, verse one of this passage seems to be a good title for this entire section- Mark wants us to see that *this* is what Jesus' kingdom looks like. But it's not quite what we would expect from a King. In fact, it's really the opposite of the pattern that has been forming throughout Mark's Gospel up until this point. Fill out the table below to see what is happening:

| Passage | Beginning   | Ending   |
|---------|---|--|
| 5:2-20  | v. 2: "And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit."  | v. 20: "And he [the man who had been cleansed from the unclean spirit] went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled." |
| 5:22-42 | vv. 22-24: "Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." And he went with him." | v. 42: "And immediately the girl got up and began walking (for she was twelve years of age), and they were immediately overcome with amazement."                                 |

|         |  |   |
|---------|--|---|
| 7:32-37 | v. 32: “And they brought to him a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment, and they begged him to lay his hand on him.” | v. 37: “And they were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.” |
| 9:2-3   |  |   |
| 9:14-29 |  |   |

For the Jews, an oppressed minority population, the dream of throwing off the Roman yoke and returning to their proper place as God’s people was a constant expectation. People were often wondering about and discussing, “Where is God’s promised deliverer, who will come and re-establish God’s reign on earth?” Do you think Jesus’ Kingdom looked like the Kingdom that people expected? Why or why not?

If the theme of this passage is “A Sneak Peek at the Kingdom”, what do you think Mark’s Gospel is trying to teach us about the nature of Jesus’ Kingdom?

## **Apply**

Mark's Gospel is not written only to *inform* us but also to *transform* us. What is one concrete response that you will enact in your everyday life to give evidence to the world of the presence of Jesus' Kingdom on earth?

# WEEK ONE

## STUDY TWO

Mark 9:1-13

### Pause & Pray

As we begin today's study of Mark's Gospel, let's spend a moment to ask God to teach us through His Spirit. Meditate and pray through this passage written by the Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Church in Corinth:

*2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (ESV)*

*<sup>17</sup>Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. <sup>18</sup>And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

Take a moment to pray that God reveal his unveiled glory to you as you search the Scriptures, and that your entire being would be 'transformed' into the shape of King Jesus.

### Study

Read **Mark 9:1-13**, working through the passage several times, taking note of both the flow of the story being told and the details being included. When you feel you have understood the story well, move on to the following questions.

Without looking back at the text, write out the story in your own words, including as many details as you can remember:

Now, look back at the text and compare your ‘account’ to what is recorded by Mark. Did you forget anything? Get any details wrong? If so, correct them briefly.

There seems to be a connection between 9:1 and 9:2-13. What do you think it is?

The voice that comes from the cloud clearly belongs to God the Father. In our introduction to the second half of Mark’s Gospel, we noted that this heavenly ‘confession’ of Jesus’ divine identity is the second of two major ‘confessions’ that span 8:27-9:7. In fact, these two ‘confessions’ together affirm the statement that begins Mark’s Gospel- “The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus [the] Christ, the Son of God.”

One significant question this should force us to consider is what God’s command to “hear him” (9:7) is referring to. Some options would be:

- The disciples should obey Jesus’ prediction of his persecution and resurrection (9:31)
- The disciples should obey Jesus’ call to take up their cross and follow him (9:34ff)
- The disciples should obey Jesus, *rather than* Moses and Elijah
- The disciples should obey Jesus in the future

Which of these options seems most likely to you? Why?

The Apostle Peter was likely Mark's source for his Gospel, and consequently stories like this have a strong first-hand, immersive effect. What do you think it was like for Peter, James and John to experience this amazing event? How do you think you would respond if you were there?

Mark's references to Elijah and Moses might seem strange, but they were undoubtedly familiar to Mark's original audience. The final verse of the Old Testament gives us this command and prophecy:

*Malachi 4:4-6 (ESV)*

<sup>4</sup>*“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at [Mount] Horeb for all Israel.*

<sup>5</sup>*“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. <sup>6</sup>And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction.”*

So to summarize, after traveling all over Israel announcing the good news of the Kingdom of God, Jesus took His three closest disciples up a great mountain, and began glowing like an angel. The two most famous Old Testament figures appeared to Him, the ones who are mentioned in association with the long awaited “day of the LORD”, in which God would finally

re-establish His Kingdom on earth. So what do you think these three Jewish disciples of Jesus expected when they witnessed these events?

The Apostle Peter wasn't afraid to put words to whatever he was thinking, and this episode is no exception to that rule. Mark's narrative comment (9:6) makes it clear that Peter's interjection is inappropriate. What do you think was wrong with what Peter said?

## Apply

We often deceive ourselves by thinking that if we saw the amazing things that Jesus' first followers saw, we would find it much easier to obey him. But this account seems to say something different. Peter, who personally followed Jesus, saw him perform many miracles, even healing Peter's mother-in-law ([Simon Peter]; 1:30-31), cast out demons, and now transfigured and appearing in glory with deceased saints of old, would later famously deny Christ in his hour of greatest need (14:66ff). The real problem was that Jesus' kingdom didn't fit his expectations. What aspect of Jesus' kingdom do you find most difficult to accept? *(For a good summary of what Jesus' kingdom looks like, look at Matthew 5-7).*

Ask God to give you faith to accept the Kingdom that God has provided in His Son rather than forcing Him into the mold that each of us has in our hearts and mind. Pray that we would truly be 'conformed to His image', as the passage we began with promised (2 Cor 3:18).

# WEEK TWO

## STUDY ONE

Mark 9:30-50

### Pause & Pray

As we enter into our time of study, take a few moments to invite God to reveal himself to you through His Word.

### Read

Today's passage is **Mark 9:30-50**. Begin by reading through the passage several times.

*Mark 9:30-50 (ESV)*

<sup>30</sup>They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, <sup>31</sup>for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." <sup>32</sup>But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

<sup>33</sup>And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" <sup>34</sup>But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. <sup>35</sup>And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." <sup>36</sup>And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, <sup>37</sup>"Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

<sup>38</sup>John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." <sup>39</sup>But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.

<sup>40</sup>For the one who is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup>For truly, I say to you,



whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

<sup>42</sup>“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup>And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. <sup>45</sup>And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. <sup>47</sup>And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup>where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ <sup>49</sup>For everyone will be salted with fire. <sup>50</sup>Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

## **Study**

This passage might seem like a bit of a jumble, but Mark has included geographic indicators to help us follow the flow of the story. Look to the passage above and circle the two times that Mark mentions the name of a city. Write them below:

1:

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2:

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If you had to give a title for each of these sections, what would it be? Write it next to the city name above.

One of the key ways that Mark teaches his readers about Jesus is through the perspective of Jesus’ disciples. Mark especially likes to use the misunderstandings of the disciples to illustrate and explain common misunderstandings about God’s Kingdom. This passage includes three examples of the disciples misunderstanding Jesus. What are they?

| Verse(s) | Who misunderstands? | What did they misunderstand?  |
|----------|---------------------|---|
| 9:32     |                     |   |
| 9:34     | The Disciples       |   |
|          |                     | That they should not tell an exorcist to stop casting out demons in Jesus' name |

New Testament scholar David Garland writes, “*Children in Jesus’ culture had no power, no status, and few rights. Their vulnerability made them utterly dependent on others for survival.*” What was Jesus trying to teach His disciples by making a comparison between the disciples and children?

Jesus uses two more illustrations to explain the nature of His kingdom in vv. 42-50. Fill out the table below and consider the portrait of His kingdom that He is painting for His disciples.

| Verse(s) | Illustration       | Message about Jesus' Kingdom   |
|----------|--------------------|--|
|          | Cutting off a hand |  |
| v. 45    |                    |  |
| v. 47    |                    |  |
| v. 50    |                    | Disciples must be single minded in their pursuit of Christ's Kingdom- mixed motivations are like salt that has been mixed with another, ineffective substance. |

Now that you have spent some time examining this passage, what do you think is being taught about Jesus through Mark 9:30-50?

## Apply

Jesus makes it clear that undivided commitment to Christ is the hallmark of participation in his Kingdom. This doesn't mean that Christians are perfect people, but that whenever they see something in their lives that might hinder their loving obedience to Jesus, they should cut it off. It means that they aim to search themselves and invite inspection by others in their life to ensure that their devotion to Christ is pure- not mixed with motivation for increased status. Is there anything in your life that needs cutting off? Invite the Spirit to search your heart and reveal any areas of 'divided interest' within you, and be ready to repent and ask Jesus to show His mercy to you- He is eager to forgive and heal you!



# WEEK TWO

## STUDY TWO

Mark 9:42-50

### Pause & Pray

Psalm 16 rejoices in God not just for what he can do to benefit those who seek him, but rejoices in who God is- the ultimate good. Read through this Psalm, with your eyes ready to let one of the verses catch your heart. Meditate on it for a few minutes and let it launch you into prayer, remembering and thanking God for his goodness.

<sup>1</sup>*Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.*

<sup>2</sup>*I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;  
I have no good apart from you."*

<sup>3</sup>*As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,  
in whom is all my delight.*

<sup>4</sup>*The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;  
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out  
or take their names on my lips.*

<sup>5</sup>*The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;  
you hold my lot.*

<sup>6</sup>*The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*

<sup>7</sup>*I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;  
in the night also my heart instructs me.*

<sup>8</sup>*I have set the LORD always before me;  
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*

<sup>9</sup>*Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;  
my flesh also dwells secure.*

<sup>10</sup>*For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,  
or let your holy one see corruption.*

*<sup>11</sup>You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. (ESV)*

## **Read**

Today's passage is **Mark 9:42-50**. Take some time to read through 9:30-50 (the surrounding context for our passage) enough times until you can retell the passage, remembering the major details. We will study the details of each verse in 9:42-50, but we want to see how the details contribute to the development of the story through the whole section of 9:30-50. When you feel ready to move on, consider the questions below.

## **Study**

We'll work through this text line by line, considering each phrase as it comes to us. In each, feel free to markup the text when you see something that catches your eye.

*<sup>42</sup>“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.”*

Who do you think “one of these little ones” refers to? Make sure to note which verse your answer is found in.

Jesus said these words in Capernaum (see 9:33). Why does this matter? Millstones were manufactured in Capernaum and were used to grind grain into flour. Capernaum is located on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus often used features of the culture around him to communicate spiritual truths about His Kingdom. How

would you paraphrase this verse in a way that would make sense to someone in our culture today?

<sup>43</sup>*And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire.*

*OBSERVATION: In our previous study of this passage, we noted the broad meaning of Jesus calling those who truly follow Him to cut off 'hand, foot or eye' if it means losing reward in His kingdom. The broad meaning is that if anything, no matter how indispensable it seems, gets in the way of our pursuit of Jesus, we should cut it off. Is Jesus just using three different body parts to communicate the same message? Mark is not one to include irrelevant details, and he could have communicated the same message using only one of these verses. Therefore, it seems apparent that each of these sayings has something unique to contribute within the broader message of 'cast aside everything that could hinder your entrance into Jesus' kingdom.'*

What do you think Jesus means when he says, "if your hand causes you to sin?" Can your hand cause you to sin?

It seems clear that Jesus doesn't intend for his disciples to literally amputate their hands or feet or gouge their eyes. So what do you think a faithful response to this command looks like?

<sup>45</sup>*And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell.*



*OBSERVATION: Yikes! Did I forget v. 44 and v. 46 below? Take a look in your own Bible and you will find that these verses are absent there as well. Why is this? The chapter and verse divisions in our Bibles are convenient, but not inspired by God. Rather, they were placed there in the 13th and 16th centuries, respectively. Since that time, we have found more and more copies of the Bible and established more reliable approaches for discerning what the original writing said. This has led scholars to conclude that some of the verses that were originally included in this helpful “versification” actually weren’t a part of the original, Holy Spirit-inspired text. But don’t worry; these verses don’t hide a secret code that unlocks the mysteries of the Bible. Mostly, these “missing” verses are later additions by those copying the text, included either accidentally or in an attempt to be ‘helpful.’ Rather than changing all of the following verses (i.e. changing v. 45 to be the new v. 44), these verses were simply removed.*

How can a foot cause you to sin in a way that differs from the way a hand can cause you to sin? (If you need some help, consider the way the word ‘foot’ is used in these Psalms: 9:15; 94:18; 121:3.)

<sup>47</sup>And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup>where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’

How can an eye cause you to sin in a way that differs from the way that a hand can cause you to sin?

This verse is the key verse that leads us to assume that Jesus is using hyperbole to make a point rather than inviting true disciples to perform surgery. Do you see why? *Hint: An eye is a paired organ whose function is not diminished much by removing one of them.*

*<sup>49</sup>For everyone will be salted with fire. <sup>50</sup>Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”*

Salt was used for many purposes in Jesus’ day. It was used to preserve food, as a seasoning for food, and to purify (or disinfect).

In verse 49, Jesus says, “everyone will be salted with fire.” This is clearly connected to the fire of judgment that he has been referring to throughout this passage. To be salted with fire seems to be correlated to the ‘purifying’ or ‘disinfecting’ property of salt. Fill out the table below to consider what point Jesus is making.

| Phrase                              | Future or Present? |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|
| “Everyone will be salted with fire” |                    |
| “Have salt in yourselves”           |                    |

What do you think Jesus is saying through these metaphorical uses of salt?

Salt was produced near the region where Jesus said these words, on the shores of the Dead Sea (so named because it’s salinity prohibits almost any organic life). This is another example of Jesus using everyday cultural features to demonstrate a point about his Kingdom. How would you

paraphrase this passage so that a coworker or friend of yours would readily understand it?

Now that you have spent quite a while drilling down into the details of the passage, take a step back and consider the passage as a whole (9:30-50). What do you think the point of this passage is?

## **Apply**

What would a faithful response to this passage look like? What does Jesus want you to do?

# WEEK THREE

## STUDY ONE

Mark 10:1-12

### Pause & Pray

As we enter into our study of Mark's Gospel, take a moment to meditate on the first couple of verses from Psalm 90:

<sup>1</sup>*Lord, you have been our dwelling place  
in all generations.*

<sup>2</sup>*Before the mountains were brought forth,  
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,  
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*

### Read

We will be studying **Mark 10:1-12**. Begin by reading through the passage several times.

<sup>1</sup>*And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.*

<sup>2</sup>*And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"* <sup>3</sup>*He answered them, "What did Moses command you?"* <sup>4</sup>*They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away."* <sup>5</sup>*And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment.* <sup>6</sup>*But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'* <sup>7</sup>*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,* <sup>8</sup>*and the two shall become one flesh.'* *So they are no longer two but one flesh.* <sup>9</sup>*What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*

<sup>10</sup>*And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.*

<sup>11</sup>*And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries*

*another commits adultery against her,<sup>12</sup> and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” (ESV)*

## **Study**

Go through the passage and circle anything that feels especially significant. Once you have done this, consider the questions below:

Did you notice that there are two different scenes that Mark sews together in verses 2-12? Where does he transition from one to the next?

What is the difference between the one group and the other?

Throughout Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’ more difficult sayings have resulted in the disciples asking Him to explain His teaching to them, as is the case here. How does Jesus’ explanation that He gives to the disciples differ from His response to the Pharisees?

Why do you think Jesus’ answer to His disciples differed from His answer to the Pharisees?

In Jesus’ time, divorce was both a hot-button *religious* debate and a hot-button *political* debate. When King Herod arrested John the Baptist, Mark tells us that the reason he resented John was because John had been rebuking Herod, telling him “*It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s [former] wife.*” Revisit Mark 6:14-20 if this doesn’t sound familiar. With this in mind,

what do you think the Pharisees were trying to accomplish when they asked this question?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus' understanding of the authority of Scripture?

Based on this passage, what do you think is Jesus' teaching about the nature of marriage? Include references to the specific words of Jesus in your answer.

How do you think this passage relates to what comes before it and after it in Mark's Gospel? (i.e. 9:30-50 & 10:13-34)

What is one practical way that you can faithfully respond to this passage?

*From Pastor Dave Foster:*

*Marriage is a sacred covenant between a man, woman and God. Marriage is the metaphor that God uses to illustrate how He feels about His people (Jer. 31:31-33; Is 54:5; Eph 5:25-33; Matt 22:2). The relationship a husband has with his wife in marriage is the best way of understanding how God loves us. Unlike our marriages it is not fractured by His unfaithfulness or insensitivity. God fulfills His side of the covenant relationship to perfection, whereas, for our part, we aren't always so perfect. Yet God endures, sustains and forgives us - over and over again. It is God's example as a heavenly husband that we are to imitate in our own marriages. Yet our lives, our marriages, are far from perfect and, unfortunately, sometimes our marriages end in divorce. Thankfully God is a God of grace and restoration. Even if you have been through a divorce, it is not the end of your relationship with the Lord. Like any action we take that is contrary to God's intended purpose, we must humble ourselves, confess our sin, and await His restoration. He promises to forgive us and put the deserved punishment and guilt for our sin far away from us. When Jesus died on the cross He took all of our sins on His shoulders and made atonement for them. Including divorce. So while we can read how important the marriage covenant is to God and that divorce is not His desire for us, it still falls under the blood of Christ.*

*If you've experienced divorce then the best thing you can do is to focus on being faithful to God and to the people in your life that make a difference. As a pastor I've talked to people that could tell they knew they had made a huge mistake on their wedding night. God knows these things and He can heal even the worst marriage. We must make sure that we pursue God by getting the best help possible to strengthen our marriage and by being obedient to God's direction in our life. Even so we can find ourselves alone and our marriage but a memory. God loves you and can bring comfort and strength at such times. Godly counsel, prayer and obedience are the surest way to experiencing the grace of God in your relationship.*

# WEEK THREE

## STUDY TWO

Mark 10:1-12

### Pause & Pray

Before we begin today's study of Mark's Gospel, let's meditate on a Psalm that celebrates God's great acts of deliverance, remembering that God has accomplished our ultimate deliverance through Jesus:

<sup>5</sup>*Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;  
our God is merciful.*

<sup>6</sup>*The LORD preserves the simple;  
when I was brought low, he saved me.*

<sup>7</sup>*Return, O my soul, to your rest;  
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you. (ESV)*

### Read

The passage we will consider today is the same as the passage from the previous study, but we will be approaching it from a different angle. To begin with, open your Bible to **Mark 10:1-12** and reacquaint yourself with this passage. If you don't remember it well, read the last study again and recall what you learned.

Because this week's passage is a bit shorter, we have already gotten most of the meat off of the bone in the first study of 10:1-12. So for today's study we're going to drill down deeper into the Gospels as a whole, through the lens of this one story. The concepts presented will be a bit more challenging. If you don't feel like you're understanding the content, don't get frustrated; this is a more advanced that will pay off in the future as you get more familiar with the Gospels, even if everything doesn't quite 'click' yet. If you have questions



about what you read, feel free to bring them to your Community Group so you can discuss them together.

One of the great wonders of the Bible is that the story of Jesus is recorded not just once or twice, but in four different books. These are the “Gospels” of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each of the four Gospels has its own style, perspective and distinct emphases, even though they all give us faithful accounts of Jesus’ life death and resurrection. Led by the Holy Spirit, each of the authors interpreted the events in the life of Jesus and portrayed them in slightly different, though equally authoritative ways. This is a great joy for the Christian, because rather than having only one authoritative account of the story of our Savior, we have four! These four Gospels work together like spotlights shining on a statue, coordinating together so that each shines unique light on the incredible story that is Jesus, the crucified and resurrected Son of God.

## Study

In today’s study, we will take a step back to observe our passage at the highest level, examining not only the passage itself, but the way that the passage is weaved into the unique perspective that each Gospel writer offers. The debate and its resulting dialogue between Jesus and the disciples is recorded not only in Mark but also in Luke and Matthew (these three are often called *Synoptic* Gospels, meaning ‘similar perspective’; *syn* = together, *optic* = vision). In Luke, these words are found in 14:34-35 and 16:18. In Matthew they are found in 19:3-12. These are printed below for convenience. Take some time to read through each Gospel account, comparing it with Mark’s rendering.

| <b>Luke 14:34-35;<br/>16:18</b>                   | <b>Matthew 19:3-12</b>  |
|---|---|
| Luke 14:34-35<br><br><sup>34</sup> “Salt is good, | <sup>3</sup> And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for |

but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? <sup>35</sup>It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (ESV)

Luke 16:18

<sup>18</sup>“Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. (ESV)

any cause?” <sup>4</sup>He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup>and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? <sup>6</sup>So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” <sup>7</sup>They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” <sup>8</sup>He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. <sup>9</sup>And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

<sup>10</sup>The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”

<sup>11</sup>But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given.

<sup>12</sup>For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.” (ESV)

Record some observations below about the differences between each account of this debate:

Matthew:

Mark:

Luke:

As we noted in the first study, Jesus is certainly making a blunt statement about the nature of marriage, and this is very important- note that in each of these three Gospel accounts, these words are included. Jesus' interpretation of the Law of Moses shows us both the moral seriousness of discipleship and also the true purpose of the Law of Moses; that under the true King, the regulations of the law will no longer be necessary because each person will love one another truly, as they were always intended to.

Let's take a look at the way each of the Gospels utilizes these words to contribute to the wider story they are telling about Jesus in their Gospel. Below you will find outlines of each of the three Gospels where these words are recorded.

## Mark

### III. Testing Jesus' Authority in Suffering (8:27-16:8)

- A. Journey to Jerusalem (8:27-10:52)
  - a. Peter's confession (8:27-33)
  - b. Call to discipleship (8:34-9:1)
  - c. Transfiguration and healing (9:2-29)
  - d. Instruction on discipleship: putting others first (9:30-50)
  - e. **Instruction on discipleship: divorce, wealth, humility (10:1-52)**

## Matthew

### XI. The Community of the Messiah Revealed (18:1-20:34) (Fourth Discourse)

- A. Characteristics of life in the kingdom community (18:1-35)
- B. **Valuing the kingdom community (19:1-20:34)**

## Luke

### V. The Journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27)

- A. The second mention of the journey to Jerusalem (13:22-17:10)
  - a. The narrow door (13:22-30)
  - b. Lament over Jerusalem (13:31-35)
  - c. The healing of a man on the Sabbath (14:1-6)
  - d. Various teachings and parables (14:7-17:10)

#### Note:

*New Testament scholar Jonathan Pennington writes that in Jesus' time, "a biographer [in this case, a Gospel writer] ... understood his or her task not merely as a "just the facts, ma'am" description, but as selective, interpretive, and intentional. Ancient writers exercised greater freedom of composition than their modern counterparts when reporting real, historical events, something their readers generally expected." Differences between modern and ancient history writing include...*

1. *Freedom to use other's words without attribution (what today we would call plagiarism was expected and even considered an honor)*
2. *"Ancient historians [and therefore our Gospel writers] tended to flesh out narratives to make a cohesive and flowing story.*
  1. *This practice also affected the reporting of speech, an area in which much more flexibility was allowed and expected than today."*
3. *There is much greater flexibility when arranging the order of events in a story. "...we quickly realize that ancient historical narratives do not maintain the chronological sequence of events as strictly as we might desire. In the Gospels narrative sequence or time does not always equal real-time chronology... However, this does not mean that there is no chronology in the gospels."*

*What does this mean? It means we don't need to get nervous when we see apparent discrepancies in accounts that record the same events. The Gospel writers were concerned to tell the historical facts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection and to interpret them faithfully. This process has produced for us four unique, authoritative accounts that each give us a unique perspective on Jesus.*

## **Apply**

We started our study today by noting the differences between these three accounts of Jesus' words that are recorded in Mark 10:1-12. Noting these differences can sometimes blind us to the fact that for the most part, these stories are making the same point. What do you think is the main point of this passage?

What does this passage teach us about the true purpose of the Laws that God gave to Israel in the Old Testament? (See 10:5-6; for further study, consider Romans 13:8-10)

With the answer to this last question in mind, what is one concrete application that you can make to honor King Jesus based on this passage?



# WEEK FOUR

## STUDY ONE

Mark 10:13-31

### Pause & Pray

As we begin today's study, spend a few moments in prayer asking God to prepare your heart to understand His Word.

### Read

Today's passage is **Mark 10:13-31**. Read through the passage a few times, marking up the passage with your observations and noting any confusing parts.

<sup>13</sup>And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. <sup>15</sup>Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." <sup>16</sup>And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

<sup>17</sup>And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>18</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. <sup>19</sup>You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" <sup>20</sup>And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." <sup>21</sup>And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." <sup>22</sup>Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

<sup>23</sup>And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

<sup>24</sup>And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is 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 a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”<sup>26</sup> And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, “Then who can be saved?”<sup>27</sup> Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”<sup>28</sup> Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.”<sup>29</sup> Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel,<sup>30</sup> who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. [31] But many who are first will be last, and the last first.” (ESV)*

## **Apply**

Usually, we finish our study by considering how the message of the passage makes a claim on our lives that we should obey as subjects of King Jesus. In this case, we’re going to do the opposite. What do you think this passage is calling you to do? What are the practical implications? Try to be as specific as possible.

## **Study**

Work through the passage again, with a different pen or highlighter (or just use a different marking from those used previously) and mark the places where Jesus speaks.

This section breaks down into three scenes. Fill out the table below, giving each a fitting title.

| Scene | Verses | Title |
|-------|--------|-------|
| I     |        |       |
| II    |        |       |
| III   |        |       |

Consider how these three ‘scenes’ relate to one another. Do you see any cohesive theme or themes that are present in all three?

This is the third time in chapters 8 through 10 that the disciples have rebuked someone inappropriately, only to have Jesus correct them. What are the other times? (*Hint: there is one in each of chapters 8-10*)

What do you think we can learn about Jesus’ Kingdom through the disciples’ mistaken rebukes?

10:14 is also the second time in chapter 10 that Jesus refers to the ‘Law of Moses,’ or the Old Testament rules for faithful living. What is the other time?

What do you think we can learn about Jesus’ view of the Old Testament code through these two references? What do they have in common?

What do you think Jesus means when He says, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.”?

## **Apply**

Revisit the first question and consider what it would look like to visibly evidence your belief in this verse. Do you agree with your preliminary application, or are some changes necessary?

# WEEK FOUR

## STUDY TWO

Mark 10:17-27

### Pause & Pray

Before we begin today's study of Mark's Gospel, ask God to guide you into the blessedness described by Psalm 1, through your meditation on his word today.

<sup>1</sup>*Blessed is the man  
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,  
nor stands in the way of sinners,  
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;  
<sup>2</sup>but his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

<sup>3</sup>*He is like a tree  
planted by streams of water  
that yields its fruit in its season,  
and its leaf does not wither.  
In all that he does, he prospers.*

<sup>4</sup>*The wicked are not so,  
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.*

<sup>5</sup>*Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,  
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;*

<sup>6</sup>*for the LORD knows the way of the righteous,  
but the way of the wicked will perish. (ESV)*

### Read

Our passage for study today is **Mark 10:17-27**. Open your Bible to this passage and read it carefully several times, until you feel you could faithfully retell it to a friend or co-worker.

## Study

Fill out the table below to map out the discussion that takes place between Jesus and the inquiring man in vv.17-22.

| Verse(s) | Speaker  | Statement |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 17       |          |           |
| 18-19    |          |           |
| 20       |          |           |
| 21       |          |           |
| 22       | Narrator |           |

Consider this story from the perspective of the inquiring man. What do you think he was looking for when he came to Jesus? Be sure to reference the text itself in your answer.

Do you think he got what he was looking for? Why or why not?

What do you think Jesus meant when he said “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone...”

How would this story be different if the first half of verse 21 were removed from this story (“And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said...”)?

When this man says, “*Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth*” (v. 20), it’s easy to think that he is being prideful or arrogant. But this phrase is used other places in the Bible (Acts 26:4) and seems to be a well-known shorthand for “I am a faithful Jew- I am blameless before the Law of Moses.” He even uses a word; translated “kept” that is correlated with the idea of *protecting, or guarding*. Jesus is divine and certainly knows whether this man is being truthful when he says these things, and he doesn’t say, “you’re a liar.” All the details in the story seem to indicate that he was being truthful. What does this mean? This was a good man! This is a good person! Really! He would qualify to be an elder in the church! We can’t cast his ‘so-called’ righteousness aside like that of the Pharisees. Knowing this, produce a paraphrase of Jesus’ loving response to this man (v. 21)

There is a lot of significance packed into v. 23-26. Jesus has an immediate, strong reaction to the case of this wealthy man- Mark writes it as an exclamation. What do we learn about the disciples from their reaction to this in v. 26?

Why were the disciples so surprised in v. 26?

How does this story relate to the one that immediately precedes it (10:13-16)?

What do you think is the 'point' of this passage?

## **Apply**

What would it look like for you to faithfully respond to this passage? Be as specific and concrete as possible.

# WEEK FIVE

## STUDY ONE

Mark 10:32-52

### Pause & Pray

Before you begin today's study of Mark's Gospel, take a moment to meditate on this portion of Psalm 86. In you are able; speak the passage aloud to help internalize it.

<sup>1</sup>*Incline your ear, O LORD, and answer me,  
for I am poor and needy.*

<sup>2</sup>*Preserve my life, for I am godly;  
save your servant, who trusts in you—you are my God.*

<sup>3</sup>*Be gracious to me, O Lord,  
for to you do I cry all the day.*

<sup>4</sup>*Gladden the soul of your servant,  
for to you, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.*

<sup>5</sup>*For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving,  
abounding in steadfast love to all who call upon you.*

<sup>6</sup>*Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer;  
listen to my plea for grace.*

<sup>7</sup>*In the day of my trouble I call upon you,  
for you answer me. (ESV)*

### Read

Today's passage is **Mark 10:32-52**. Take some time to read through this passage several times, marking up the text with your own notes.

<sup>32</sup>*And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, <sup>33</sup>saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. <sup>34</sup>And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."*



<sup>35</sup>And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."  
<sup>36</sup>And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" <sup>37</sup>And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." <sup>38</sup>Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" <sup>39</sup>And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, <sup>40</sup>but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." <sup>41</sup>And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. <sup>42</sup>And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

<sup>46</sup>And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. <sup>47</sup>And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>48</sup>And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" <sup>49</sup>And Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart. Get up; he is calling you." <sup>50</sup>And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. <sup>51</sup>And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" And the blind man said to him, "Rabbi, let me recover my sight." <sup>52</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way. (ESV)

## **Study**

In the study guide for the first half of Mark's Gospel, we noted that one of the ways that Mark communicates meaning through his Gospel is through the use of characters. Mark wants us to compare and contrast the people that we observe in his story and make a judgment about whose actions are

worth imitating and those whose actions are faithless. There are at least 3 characters or sets of characters in this passage (apart from Jesus). Fill out the table below to get a handle on this feature. Leave the third column blank for now.

| Verse(s) | Person(s) | Contrast |
|----------|-----------|----------|
| v.32     |           |          |
| vv.35-45 |           |          |
| v.46-52  |           |          |

If you had to pick which of the three we are meant to imitate, which do you think it would be? Circle this box on the chart.

Why do you think this is the one that we are supposed to imitate? Write your answer in the box next to their name(s) in the chart.

As mentioned above, not only are we meant to compare characters in this section but also to *contrast* between them. Now that you have identified what you think makes your selection worthy of imitation, fill in the third column for the other two rows, noting why two options that you didn't select are *not* worthy of imitation.

The section, which begins in 9:14 and ends in our passage (10:52), is clearly a compilation of Jesus' teaching about the nature of his Kingdom and the accompanying requirements for true discipleship. But Mark bookends this section on either end with a healing story. Fill out this table to help determine what Mark is communicating through this feature.

| Passage  | Disciple's Action in the passage | Jesus' Final Words in the passage |
|----------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 9:14-29  |                                  |                                   |
| 10:46-52 |                                  |                                   |

What do you think Mark is trying to communicate to us about what it means to follow Jesus through this narrative device?

Mark 10:46-52 is the *fourth* and final time that Jesus has provided correction for an inappropriate rebuke. In our first study of Mark 10:13-31, we noted some preliminary observations about Mark's portrayal of these rebukes, but now let's take them all together.

| Passage  | Person(s) Rebuked | Jesus' Actions |
|----------|-------------------|----------------|
| 8:32-33  |                   |                |
| 9:38-41  |                   |                |
| 10:13-14 |                   |                |
| 10:48    | The Crowd         |                |

Do you see any unifying characteristics among this group? If so, what do you think Mark is trying to teach us about God's kingdom?

## Apply

What is one concrete way that you can lovingly obey Jesus in response to this passage?



# WEEK FIVE

## STUDY TWO

Mark 10:35-45

### Pause & Pray

Take some time to meditate and pray through this portion of Psalm 20 before we begin our study of Mark's Gospel:

<sup>4</sup>*May he grant you your heart's desire  
and fulfill all your plans!*

<sup>5</sup>*May we shout for joy over your salvation,  
and in the name of our God set up our banners!  
May the LORD fulfill all your petitions!*

<sup>6</sup>*Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed;  
he will answer him from his holy heaven  
with the saving might of his right hand.*

<sup>7</sup>*Some trust in chariots and some in horses,  
but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.*

<sup>8</sup>*They collapse and fall,  
but we rise and stand upright.*

<sup>9</sup>*O LORD, save the king!  
May he answer us when we call. (ESV)*

### Read

The passage we will study today is **Mark 10:35-45**. Read through this passage several times and become familiar with it.

## Study

Try to write out your own paraphrased version of the interaction below:

This passage isn't really composed of just one interaction but two. What are the two interactions? Fill out the table below

|   | Verse(s) | Group/Person #1 | Group Person #2 |
|---|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1 |          |                 |                 |
| 2 |          |                 |                 |

What were James and John asking Jesus to do when they asked to sit at His right and left hand? Does this just refer to a seating arrangement? (If you need some help, take a look at Miciah's vision of the heavenly court in 1 Kings 22:19)

Does Jesus completely reject James and John's request?  
(Consider vv. 42-43; see also Matt 19:28 if you need more help)

As is so often the case, Jesus' doesn't directly respond to James and John's question but rather responds to the assumption that lies beneath the question. What does Jesus' answer reveal about the real problem with James and John's request?

James and John's question clearly reveals a lack of understanding about the nature of true discipleship. Jesus' response to their question uses two images to show them their mistake. It's important to understand what each of these images is communicating to the two disciples (and to us). Fill out the table below to better understand why James and John's request was mistaken.

| Image   | Scriptural Image                     | Significance |
|---------|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| Cup     | See Isaiah 51:17;<br>Mark 14:36      |              |
| Baptism | See Leviticus 11:24;<br>Psalm 69:1-3 |              |

Now that you understand these Scriptural references, what do you think was the problem with James and John's question?



Why do you think that the ‘ten’ (the 12 disciples, not including James and John) were so upset about in v. 41? Were their motives good?

When we hear the word ‘ransom’ (v. 45), our most natural connection is to think of a Hollywood kidnapping plot. But when Mark’s original audience heard the word ‘ransom’, the most natural connection was to think of a well-known process through which a wealthy individual could purchase the freedom of a slave. What is Jesus telling us about the significance of his imminent death?

Because we live in a culture that has been influenced at a deep level by the idea that Jesus is introducing in verse 45, it is easy for us to forget the radical nature of Jesus’ statement. Try to produce a paraphrase of this statement that captures the scandalous nature of the truth that Jesus is introducing to these disciples:

Optional bonus question: Mark seems to go out of his way to draw a comparison between James and John’s request and that of Bartimaeus (compare 10:36 and 10:51). What do you think Mark is teaching us about Jesus and about discipleship through this implicit comparison?

## Apply

Jesus' call to us today is the same as it was to James and John and the other ten. Everyone carries with them a sinful impulse to attain as much status and significance for ourselves while suffering as little as possible. Jesus turns this fundamental on it's head and tells us that the ultimate goal for disciples is to give status and significance away to benefit others, no matter the cost. What is one concrete way that you can join Jesus in this radical movement, giving evidence to the presence of his Kingdom on earth?



# WEEK SIX

## STUDY ONE

Mark 11

### Pause & Pray

As we begin our study of God's Word, take a moment to humble yourself as you approach the Bible. A literal translation of the third commandment tells us that we must never 'take the Lord's name *lightly* (Ex. 20:7).' If that's how we should treat His *name*, how much more honor should we give His words? The reason we take a moment to prepare our hearts before we read God's Word is because the way we treat someone's words is an indication of the way we regard that person in general. Let's read God's words with the sense of gravity and significance that they merit. This isn't something we can do on our own- so let's ask God to help us, and read some of God's words from Psalm 33 that remind us of the posture that His Word deserves.

<sup>1</sup>*Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!*

*Praise befits the upright.*

<sup>2</sup>*Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre;*

*make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!*

<sup>3</sup>*Sing to him a new song;*

*play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.*

<sup>4</sup>*For the word of the LORD is upright,*

*and all his work is done in faithfulness.*

<sup>5</sup>*He loves righteousness and justice;*

*the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.*

<sup>6</sup>*By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,*

*and by the breath of his mouth all their host.*

<sup>7</sup>*He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap;*

*he puts the deeps in storehouses.*

<sup>8</sup>*Let all the earth fear the LORD;*

*let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!*

<sup>9</sup>*For he spoke, and it came to be;  
he commanded, and it stood firm. (ESV)*

## **Read**

The passage for our study today is **Mark 11**. Turn to this passage in your Bible now. We will read through the passage three times, taking notes below.

First, read through the passage twice, quickly, focusing on following the pattern of the story that Mark is telling. Don't dwell over the details in the passage; just try to experience the story as Mark tells it without drilling down into the individual words. Record your observations below:

Second, read through the passage once, slowly, focusing on the details that Mark records. Do the opposite of your first readings: try not to pay attention to the flow of the story, but rather to the details of the story. Record your observations below:

**Optional bonus question:** Which do you think makes more sense- to read the passage as a 'story' first (as above), or to focus on the passage's details? Or something else altogether?

If you had to explain this passage to someone right now, how would you explain what this passage is *about*? What's the point or points of this passage? Try to incorporate your observations that you recorded in your 'readings' above.

How is Jesus received in Jerusalem?

How would you describe Jesus' actions in this passage? Do you see any pattern formed?

What do we learn about Jesus from this passage? Make as many observations as you can. Nothing is too small.

Previously, you were asked how you would explain this passage to someone, and you considered what was the main point(s) of the passage. What do you think is the main point being made about Jesus in this passage? How does your answer to this question relate to your answer to the previous question about the point(s) of the passage)?

How do you think God wants us to live differently in response to this passage? What is one concrete way that you will live differently because of what you learned through today's study?



# WEEK SIX

## STUDY TWO

Mark 11

### Pause & Pray

Before we begin our study of Mark's Gospel, take a moment to meditate on Psalm 131, one of the shortest Psalms. Psalm 131 is a great reminder of an appropriate posture when we approach God and His Word.

<sup>1</sup>*O LORD, my heart is not lifted up;  
my eyes are not raised too high;  
I do not occupy myself with things  
too great and too marvelous for me.*

<sup>2</sup>*But I have calmed and quieted my soul,  
like a weaned child with its mother;  
like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

<sup>3</sup>*O Israel, hope in the LORD  
from this time forth and forevermore. (ESV)*

### Read

Today we will be studying **Mark 11:11-20**. Turn there in your Bible and read through the passage several times. You may notice that verse 11 and verse 20 belong with other sections and not with the one we are studying. This has been done on purpose, as you will see shortly.

Today, we will focus on the way Mark uses the 'cursing of the fig tree' to explain Jesus' actions in Mark 11. To begin with, outline the chapter by filling out the table below.



### Outline of Mark 11

| Verse(s) | Person(s) or Action(s) reported (write a brief, one sentence or less description) |
|----------|---|
| 1-6      | Jesus sends his disciples to retrieve the colt                                    |
| 7-10     |   |
| 11       |   |
| 12-13    |   |
| 14       |   |
| 15-16    |   |
| 17       |   |
| 18-19    |   |
| 20       |   |
| 21       |   |
| 22-25    |   |
| 27-28    |   |
| 29-30    |   |
| 31-32    |   |
| 33       |   |

### **Study**

Now that you have spent some time in the passage, we will focus our attention on the way that Mark uses the story of the cursing of the fig tree to explain Jesus' actions in Jerusalem in chapter 11.

It quickly becomes clear when reading the Gospels that those who wrote them did not wish to insert narrative comments into the story to explain the significance of an event. Rather, they want the significance of an event to be told *through* the story itself and the way that it is told. When you or I tell a story to a friend, we might insert little comments frequently to clarify details and to explain why each little detail mattered. The writers of the Gospels were careful not to include these types of comments if they could avoid it, because they were so concerned to let the stories themselves portray the significance of the events being described. This can sometimes be frustrating, especially for those of us who are less attuned to the nuances of a good story. Understanding these nuances is key to discovering the way that the Gospels communicate the story of Jesus.

It was expensive to write and copies were difficult to make, so the Gospel writers wouldn't include unnecessary details in their stories. When we see details in the story that seem unnecessary, we should press on and try to discover their purpose. Let's first look at verse 13 with this principle in mind.

*<sup>13</sup>And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. (ESV)*

We have to ask ourselves, does it matter *why* Jesus curses the fig tree? Why does it matter that Jesus saw the leaves of the fig tree from afar, and then, when he approached it, didn't find the fruit that he expected? Being sensitive to these details and asking good questions is what makes us good Gospel readers.

Imagine that you are watching a movie, and you notice something peculiar. At certain points in the movie, the director has inserted video clips of a certain flower. In one of them, the flower sprouts and grows to its fullest beauty. In another one, the flower shrivels, turns brown, and dies. On your first viewing of the movie, these short clips didn't make much sense to you. But the next time you watch it, you make the

connection- the director is using the video clip of the flower to make a point about a certain character in the film. When the flower is growing, the character was in the prime of life. When the flower was dying, that character's life was about to end.

This is the same type of comparison that Jesus wants us to make through the lens of the Fig tree. The Fig tree is an analogy for Jerusalem. Mark intends for us to form a natural comparison between the Fig tree, which is cursed by Jesus, and Jerusalem, which is also cursed. He does this by including elements of the story that correspond to one another. Fill out the table below to start to put together Mark's use of this clever storytelling device.

### Mark's Use of the Fig Tree in Chapter 11

| Verse | Fig Tree Account  | Jerusalem   | Verse |
|-------|---|---|-------|
|       | Jesus approaches the tree from a distance                   | "Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany..."   |       |
|       | Jesus sees leaves on the tree, which indicates fruitfulness | "And many spread their cloaks on the road, and other spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields."  |       |
|       | Jesus finds the tree fruitless                              | "...he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything..."<br><br>"Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'?..." |       |
|       | Jesus curses the tree                                       | "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."   |       |
|       | The tree is withered and dead                               | Jerusalem is destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD (After Mark finished writing his Gospel)  | ?     |

Clearly, Mark has gone through a lot of trouble to draw this comparison. The comparison portrays Jerusalem as a city that shows the outward signs of fruitfulness, but upon closer inspection, has not fulfilled its purpose. As Jesus approaches the city, Jerusalem seems to have an appropriate response- they honor Him as they would a King! But this outward sign of fruitfulness was hiding a rotten core. Jesus didn't find what He expected when He entered the temple. What did He expect? (Focus on 11:17)

Jesus expected to find 'the nations' (another translation could be 'the Gentiles' or 'non-Jews') but did not find them there. What does this tell us about the true purpose of the Temple that God established? *(If you need help, consider God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3)*

What does this teach us about God's concern for fruitfulness in his current Temple- The Church?

## Apply

If Jesus visited your house, or your Community Group, what 'fruitfulness' would he commend? What 'fruitlessness' might need to be cleansed?

The Temple was designed by God not only to bless the nation of Israel, but also to draw all of the nations to the blessing that comes through obedience to the one true God. Our lives also have a designed purpose. It is to honor God through Holy living, and to love and serve our neighbors, especially by sharing the Gospel. Take some time to ask God to reveal areas of your life that aren't pleasing to Him, and repent as He brings them to mind. Spend some time considering how God is leading you toward greater faithfulness to Him in these areas, and how you can live out the things you have learned.

# WEEK SEVEN

## STUDY ONE

Mark 12

### Pause & Pray

The Psalms are full of rich imagery used to form us into more Godly people. Begin today's study by reading through this short portion of Psalm 143 and inviting God to help you yearn for Him like the Psalm writer does.

<sup>5</sup>*I remember the days of old;  
I meditate on all that you have done;  
I ponder the work of your hands.*  
<sup>6</sup>*I stretch out my hands to you;  
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. (ESV)*

### Read

Today's passage for study is **Mark 12**. Turn there in your Bible and read through the chapter once before you move on to the questions below.

### Study

What is the setting of this chapter? Where did these things take place?

How is this chapter connected to the end of Chapter 11?

There is so much packed into this chapter that it would be helpful to approach it more carefully. Fill out the table to consider each story in turn.

| Passage  | Title<br>(Use the heading from your Bible<br>or come up with your own) | What do we<br>learn from<br>this story? |
|----------|--|---|
| v. 1-12  |  |   |
| v. 13-17 |  |   |
| v. 18-27 |  |   |
| v. 28-34 |  |   |
| v. 35-37 |  |   |
| v. 38-40 |  |   |
| v. 41-44 |  |   |

In order to understand Jesus' parable in vv. 1-12, it is important to know that 'vineyard' is a very common metaphor for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament (see Isaiah 3:14; Jeremiah 12:10).

Do you see the irony in the response of the Jewish leaders to Jesus' parable in v. 12? One of Mark's goals in the second half of his Gospel is to demonstrate that Jesus' suffering is the fulfillment of God's plans for his nation, Israel. How does this

irony in vv. 1-12 show that Jesus fulfills God's plans? (*Hint: Consider v. 7 in relation to the Jewish leaders response in v. 12*)

At the end of this chapter, Mark includes the story of a poor widow's offering. It seems rather out of place, since the rest of the chapter has related to Jesus' teaching in the Temple. Mark leaves a clue to the connection in the previous section, in verse 40. What is it? What do you think Mark is trying to point out through this association?

We also need to pay attention to the discipleship lesson that Jesus teaches through this poor widow's offering. It would be easy to spiritualize Jesus' words, as if he said "*it is as though* this widow put in more than all those who are contributing." But that is not what He says. He says "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow *has put in more than* all those who are contributing to the offering box." Simply put, 'widow's offering > all the others.' What do we learn about Jesus' view of our offerings through this?

One pattern that seems to emerge from these stories is that Jesus doesn't like to answer questions directly. He prefers to answer questions with another question or through a statement that doesn't really answer the question being asked. There is one exception to this rule in Chapter 12. Can you find it? How does the rest of the interaction between this person and Jesus help explain this difference?



What is the overall image of Jesus that Mark records in Chapter 12? How are we supposed to react to this? (*Hint: consider the end of v. 34 in your answer*)

## **Apply**

If you truly believed all that this passage teaches about who God is, how would your life change today? Record at least one concrete way that this passage ought to result in life change.

# WEEK SEVEN

## STUDY TWO

Mark 12:13-17

### Pause & Pray

As we begin our study of Mark's Gospel, let's set the posture of our hearts by slowly considering this portion of Psalm 4 and using it to launch into prayer. Let this passage remind us that true blessedness comes through God, who, through Jesus, has proven to us that often the best results come from the most difficult circumstances.

<sup>6</sup>*There are many who say, "Who will show us some good?  
Lift up the light of your face upon us, O LORD!"*

<sup>7</sup>*You have put more joy in my heart  
than they have when their grain and wine abound.*

<sup>8</sup>*In peace I will both lie down and sleep;  
for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. (ESV)*

### Read

The passage we will study today is **Mark 12:13-17**. Read through this passage a few times, and take note of what comes immediately before and after. We will work through the passage line by line, drawing in outside resources that will help us understand what is being communicated in each verse. It will be helpful to keep your Bible open to this passage as you work through the questions below, but the text is printed for convenience.

### Study

<sup>13</sup>*And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk.*

The first thing we need to do as we read this passage is to take a moment to appreciate the setting. Fill out the table below to reacquaint yourself with the setting.

| Location- where did this happen?<br>(Hint- see 11:27) | Audience- what groups were there?<br>(Hint- see 11:27, 12:12, 12:13) | Any other significance to this time period?<br>(Hint- see 14:1-2) |
|---|--|---|
|   |  |   |

One additional piece of information is necessary to understand the weight of what this verse is communicating. It is easy to read “Pharisees and Herodians” and lump them together into the same group under the heading ‘religious leaders.’ But this would be a mistake. Though it is a bit of an oversimplification, it makes sense to think of the Pharisees as a religiously motivated party, and the Herodians as a politically motivated party. They were political enemies, and wouldn’t have associated with the other group’s members. The only time that they appear together is when their ambitions happen to align. This happens two times in Mark’s Gospel. The first time is in our passage today and the other is found in Mark 3:6. What do these two occasions share in common?

So, to set the scene, Jesus has just told an unbelievably aggressive parable *against* the Chief Priests and the Scribes in the Temple (12:1-11). Their response, had they been alone with Him, would have been to seize Him immediately. Because Jesus has won the hearts of the people through His amazing miracles and wisdom, they know they cannot arrest Him in this way, or else the people will have a riot. So what do they do? Verse 13 gives us the answer. Keep this in mind as we continue to read this story.

<sup>14</sup>*And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?"*

Without knowing anything about the background of this situation, what observations can you make about this statement? (*If you feel a bit lost, compare this question with other questions asked of Jesus in 2:24, 2:18 and 7:5, and pay attention to the differences you see*)

Since Mark has already told us that this question is intended to 'trap him in his talk,' we know that this question is not a genuine question. It is intended to leave Jesus with only two options, a point that Mark carefully draws out by including the unnecessary second question "Should we pay them, or should we not?" What about this question would 'trap' Jesus? To understand how dangerous this question was, we need to understand a little bit about the situation Israel was facing at the time these words were spoken.

The tax that is being referred to was not a general tax like income tax or property tax that we are familiar with today. It was a tax on every individual in Israel, and it was particularly unpopular with the people. In fact, when the tax was first instituted, a Jewish messiah figure named Judas the Galilean led an armed revolt, entering Jerusalem and cleansing the temple, and telling everyone that since God was their King, they must not offer a tribute (tax) to Caesar. What happened to him? The Roman army violently extinguished his revolution (See Acts 5:33-42). And not too long afterward, Jesus has entered Jerusalem, cleansed the Temple, and declared the Kingdom of God all over Israel. Does that sound familiar? Only one element is missing. Is he launching a political revolution or just a new ideology, a tame, sterilized, puny 'spiritual' movement?

So, what is the real question being asked by the unlikely allies of the Pharisees and Herodians? Obviously, if Jesus answers “Yes, pay the tax”, then He will lose all of his followers, who expect him to stand up to the Roman occupying army and establish their political freedom. But if Jesus answers “No, don’t pay the tax”, then He will be seized by the Romans and killed. What is He to do? As His interrogators put it, there are only two options- “Should we pay them, or should we not?” The drama has reached a fever pitch.

<sup>15</sup>*But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.”*

Without knowing any background information, what can you observe about Jesus based on this response?

Mark uses irony here to show us Jesus as a strange kind of King. If Jesus is supposed to be the King, what is strange about His request? (*Need help? See the hint below.*)

The nice thing about coins is that they tend to survive intact for a long time, and we actually have several examples of the type of coin that was handed to Jesus in this verse. On it was an image of Tiberius Caesar, along with the following phrases on the front and back:

**Front:** “Tiberius Caesar, Son of the God Augustus”

**Back:** “High Priest”

Are you beginning to see the type of issue that we’re dealing with in this passage? Do you see the dangerous question that these men were asking? As Christians, we know that Jesus is the only Son of God, not Tiberius (John 3:16). We also know that Jesus, not Tiberius, is our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14).

Will Jesus affirm this blasphemous coinage or will He condemn the coin's statements and be put to death by the Romans before His time has come?

<sup>16</sup>*And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's."*

We could lose this entire verse, and the passage would still 'make sense'. We would, however, miss one big clue to what Jesus' response is really teaching us. Do you recall reading the word 'likeness' anywhere else in the Bible? Where? (Look to the bottom for a hint)

The Greek word used here is the same as the word translated 'image' in the verse mentioned in the hint for the previous question. What is the significance of this? Let's read on:

<sup>17</sup>*Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him.*  
(ESV)

Before we move on to Jesus' response, let's first note how this passage ends. In the first 'act' of Mark's Gospel (chapters 1-8), people are frequently 'amazed' or 'marvel' at Jesus (e.g. 1:27; 2:12). But in Mark's second act (chapters 9-16), there is very little amazement. Until now. What is so 'amazing' about Jesus' answer?

What do you think Mark is trying to teach us about how the 'amazement' of act one differs from the 'amazement' of act two?

The word translated 'render' is difficult to convey. It has the sense of 'restore,' 'give back,' even 'return.' Clearly, Jesus has a particular principle in mind, especially when we consider His use of the word 'image' (or likeness) in v. 16. Jesus says that we should give to Caesar the things that have his image on them; after all, the coin was minted out of Tiberius' own money. But what is the thing that carries God's image that we cannot render to Caesar?

## **Apply**

What do you think this passage teaches us about how Christians should engage politics?

What would a faithful response to this passage look like in your own life?

# WEEK EIGHT

## STUDY ONE

Mark 13

### Pause & Pray

Take a few minutes to meditate on this portion of Psalm 25, letting it launch you into prayer, asking God to teach you from Mark 13 today.

<sup>4</sup>*Make me to know your ways, O LORD;  
teach me your paths.*

<sup>5</sup>*Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all the day long.*

<sup>6</sup>*Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love,  
for they have been from of old.*

<sup>7</sup>*Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions;  
according to your steadfast love remember me,  
for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! (ESV)*

### Read

Today's passage for study is **Mark 13**. Read through the passage below once and then consider the questions below.

<sup>1</sup>*And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" <sup>2</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."*

<sup>3</sup>*And as he sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup>"Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?" <sup>5</sup>And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. <sup>6</sup>Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. <sup>7</sup>And when you hear of wars*



and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. <sup>8</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains.

<sup>9</sup>“But be on your guard. For they will deliver you over to councils, and you will be beaten in synagogues, and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them. <sup>10</sup>And the gospel must first be proclaimed to all nations. <sup>11</sup>And when they bring you to trial and deliver you over, do not be anxious beforehand what you are to say, but say whatever is given you in that hour, for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. <sup>12</sup>And brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death. <sup>13</sup>And you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.

<sup>14</sup>“But when you see the abomination of desolation standing where he ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. <sup>15</sup>Let the one who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything out, <sup>16</sup>and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. <sup>17</sup>And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! <sup>18</sup>Pray that it may not happen in winter. <sup>19</sup>For in those days there will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation that God created until now, and never will be. <sup>20</sup>And if the Lord had not cut short the days, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect, whom he chose, he shortened the days. <sup>21</sup>And then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Christ!’ or ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. <sup>22</sup>For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, the elect. <sup>23</sup>But be on guard; I have told you all things beforehand.

<sup>24</sup>“But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, <sup>25</sup>and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. <sup>26</sup>And then they will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. <sup>27</sup>And then he will send out the angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

<sup>28</sup>“From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup>So

also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. <sup>30</sup>Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. <sup>31</sup>Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

<sup>32</sup>“But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. <sup>33</sup>Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. <sup>34</sup>It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. <sup>35</sup>Therefore stay awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning—<sup>36</sup>lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. <sup>37</sup>And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake.” (ESV)

## Study

Did this passage feel different from any other that you have read in Mark’s Gospel so far? If it did, don’t worry, you’re not the first one to notice the peculiar character of Mark 13, however, it certainly isn’t out of character for the Gospels as a whole (see Matt. 24 and Luke 21). Much of what Jesus refers to in this chapter is forth-telling prophecy, meaning that he is predicting events that have not yet happened. Many of Jesus’ predictions in Mark 13 were fulfilled within 100 years of the prediction. Some of them have still not been fulfilled, but will be fulfilled when Jesus comes again for a second time. (See Mark 13:26-27)

While most of this passage is composed of a speech that Jesus delivered to his disciples, there is still a big picture context that we need to appreciate in order to begin to understand Jesus’ words. Complete the outline to help with this process.

| Verse(s) | Description |
|----------|-------------|
| 1        |             |
| 2        |             |
| 3-4      |             |
| 5-31     |             |
| 32-37    |             |

How do you think Peter, James and John responded to these words?

How do you think you would respond?

One notable feature of Mark 13 is that Jesus doesn't merely offer a prophetic vision but he also gives his disciples commandments as to how they should act after he is gone. Work through the passage again and underline the verses that are commands to be obeyed by Jesus' disciples rather than predictions of coming events. (E.g. "See that no one leads you astray..." is a command, not a prediction)

Though these commands were directed toward Jesus' so-called "inner three" (Peter, James and John), these commands still have an application for us today. What effect should Mark 13 have on us as Christians?

## Apply

Look back at one of the 'commands' of Mark 13 that you marked in a previous question, and choose one to explore more deeply. Write it below, and then consider what it would look like to obey that command completely in your own life. Being as specific as possible.



# WEEK EIGHT

## STUDY TWO

Mark 13:32-37

### Pause & Pray

Let's begin our study today by meditating on this portion of Psalm 119, asking God to teach us from His Word:

<sup>174</sup>*I long for your salvation, O LORD,  
and your law is my delight.*

<sup>175</sup>*Let my soul live and praise you,  
and let your rules help me.*

<sup>176</sup>*I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek your servant,  
for I do not forget your commandments. (ESV)*

### Read

Today we will be studying **Mark 13:32-37**. Turn to this place in your Bible and read through the passage a few times to get familiar with it. When you feel ready, move on to the questions below:

### Apply

As we have done once before, we will begin our study by writing an application of this passage. What is one concrete faithful response to this passage that you will implement in your life?

### Study

The entirety of chapter is composed of Jesus' answer to a question from Peter, James and John. What is it?

With this in mind, what do you think is the significance of Jesus' admonition in verse 32 that "no one knows..." when these things will take place, except God the Father? Isn't Mark 13 trying to tell us this exact information?

Whenever a passage repeats the same phrase multiple times, our ears should perk up. There is one very significant command that is repeated three times by Jesus. What is it? Fill out the table below with your observations

|   | Verse | Command |
|---|-------|---------|
| 1 |       |         |
| 2 |       |         |
| 3 |       |         |

If you are familiar with the story of Jesus' arrest and trial, you might remember several details from later scenes that Jesus seems to be predicting here. Is there a future scene where this passage would have been important for the disciples to remember? (See *Mark 14:32-42* for a hint.)

From this passage it seems as though Jesus' command to 'keep awake' is not just an individual command but rather a summarizing command, the all-important concluding application of His warnings about future events. Jesus' words in v. 37 are especially important for us. Take a moment to transcribe those words below:

What does Mark 13:34-35 tell us about the role that Peter, James and John would play after Jesus' departure?

While the disciples command to stay awake had at least one literal sense (again, see Mk 14:32-42), it also has an important meaning for us. If an unbelieving coworker asked you what Mark 13:37 means, how would you reply?

## **Apply**

What would it look like to 'stay awake?'

As a church:

In your Community Group:

Yourself:





# WEEK NINE

## STUDY ONE

Mark 14

### Pause & Pray

Meditate and pray through this portion of Psalm 57 as we begin our study of Mark's Gospel:

<sup>1</sup>*Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,  
for in you my soul takes refuge;  
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,  
till the storms of destruction pass by.*

<sup>2</sup>*I cry out to God Most High,  
to God who fulfills his purpose for me.*

<sup>3</sup>*He will send from heaven and save me;  
he will put to shame him who tramples on me.*

*God will send out his steadfast love and his faithfulness! (ESV)*

### Read

Today we will be studying **Mark 14**. Take a few moments to read through this passage one time slowly.

### Study

One of the challenges of digesting this passage is the sheer length of it. One helpful practice when approaching such a large passage is to outline it. Mark seems concerned to arrange these events chronologically, so it is a good idea to put together the contents of each of the two days that are recorded in this chapter. Fill out the table to get a handle on the contents of Mark 14.

| Day | Verse | What happened? (A brief note describing the contents of the passage.) |
|-----|-------|---|
| 1   | 1-2   |   |
|     | 3-9   |   |
|     | 10-11 |   |
| 2   | 12-21 |   |
|     | 22-26 |   |
|     | 32-42 |   |
|     | 43-50 |   |
|     | 51-52 |   |
|     | 53-65 |   |
|     | 66-72 |   |

One important thing to note during these last two chapters of Mark's Gospel is the example of the disciples. In this chapter, there are an incredible number of different characters that appear, perhaps more than in any other chapter in Mark. One of the natural questions that we form as readers is "who are we supposed to imitate?" Look at the outline you created above and put a star next to a scene that features a character, besides Jesus, that we are meant to imitate.

Which character or characters did you find to be portrayed as worthy of imitation?

What does this passage teach us about Jesus? Note which verse(s) led you to each observation.

Over and over again in Mark 13 and 14, Jesus is shown to predict things to happen before they actually happen. This theme of fulfillment is stronger here than any other place in Mark's Gospel. What do you think this is supposed to teach us about Jesus' death?

As we mentioned in the introduction to Mark's Gospel (in the first part of this study guide), Mark's original audience was being persecuted and even killed because of their faith. Try to imagine that you are facing a situation of persecution like they were. With this in mind, what do you think this passage would be encouraging you to do or not do?

## **Apply**

What does this passage teach us about discipleship in our own day? Or, to put it another way; based on this passage, what does it mean to follow Jesus?

What is one concrete way that you can obey the message that this chapter is proclaiming?

Optional Bonus Question: As we have mentioned previously, Mark's Gospel is well known for presenting a fast-paced narrative of Jesus' life, frequently using the word 'immediately.' But while the first half of Mark's Gospel covers some 3 years of Jesus' ministry, the second half of Mark covers as little as two weeks of actual time. This jerks the entire production into slow motion, zeroing in on the focal point of Mark's Gospel. What do you think is the effect that Mark intends to accomplish in us as readers as we read the ending of his Gospel?

# WEEK NINE

## STUDY TWO

Mark 14:1-11

### Pause & Pray

As we begin today's study of Mark's Gospel, take a moment to internalize and pray through this portion of Psalm 25, inviting God to be your teacher and guide as you study His Word today.

<sup>4</sup>*Make me to know your ways, O LORD;  
teach me your paths.*

<sup>5</sup>*Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all the day long. (ESV)*

### Read

Today we will study **Mark 14:1-11**. Turn there in your Bible and read through the passage a few times to familiarize yourself with it. When you feel ready, move on to the questions below.

### Study

In the space below, write a list of the characters (or groups) featured in this passage:

As we noted in the previous study on Mark 14, this passage is meant to teach us something about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. In that study we focused on the chapter as a whole, but this time we'll focus on these 11 verses. Though you may have noted this in the previous study, write which character you think is worthy of imitation in this story, and which ones are not.

**Worthy of imitating:**

**Not worth imitating:**

What do we learn about Jesus' expectations for how we treat the poor based on this passage?

Try to read this story from the point of view of the disciples. Their Rabbi has been traveling all over Israel teaching people about the Kingdom of God and showing compassion for the poor and destitute. He has been refusing to let people honor Him as a King and hushing everyone who identifies Him correctly. Then, during the most holy season of the Jewish calendar, a woman enters and starts intimately anointing Jesus' head with the equivalent of \$35,000 worth of perfume. It seems scandalous and wasteful. Don't you think you would have protested as well?

This is not the first time that Jesus has rebuked his disciples for scolding someone inappropriately. In fact, this is a running theme in the last chapters of Mark, and it comes to a climax in this verse. What is revealed about the misunderstanding of the disciples through this inappropriate scolding of the woman who anoints him? (*Hint: How does Jesus interpret the purpose of this anointing?*)

This is another occasion where Mark has told a story in two parts that could have been told in just one passage. What do you think Mark is trying to communicate about the reason that Judas betrayed Jesus by telling this story in two parts? (*Need some help? Consider John's telling of the story in John 12:1-6.*)

What do you think Jesus means when He says in verse 8 that the woman “has done what she could?”

What application could this have for us today?

Why do you think Jesus makes this grand prophecy about this woman’s faithful act in verse 9? Specifically, how does it contrast with the fate of Jesus’ disciples in Mark’s Gospel?

## Apply

What is one concrete way that you can faithfully respond to this passage today?

Optional Bonus Question: Time and time again, Jesus’ disciples are shown to misunderstand Jesus’ identity and mission on earth. This fact should give us great confidence in the reliability of Mark’s Gospel; since he had nothing to gain by making the founders of the Church look bad. The only good reason he would portray them this way is if he were really reporting the facts. However, many have noted that out of the four Gospels, Mark gives us the worst impression of the disciples. This leaves us with few examples of faithful followers of Christ. By the end of the story, there is actually no one left who follows Jesus. Why do you think Mark does this?





# WEEK TEN

## STUDY ONE

Mark 15

### Pause & Pray

Today we'll begin our study by contemplating this portion of Psalm 89 and praying for God's wisdom as we near the end of Mark's Gospel:

<sup>14</sup>*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne;  
steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.*

<sup>15</sup>*Blessed are the people who know the festal shout,  
who walk, O LORD, in the light of your face,*

<sup>16</sup>*who exult in your name all the day  
and in your righteousness are exalted. (ESV)*

### Read

Today we will study **Mark 15**. Open your Bible to this passage and read through it once, slowly and carefully.

### Study

Jesus faced a trial before the religious leaders in chapter 14. In chapter 15, he faces a legal trial. At this time, since the Roman Empire ruled over Israel, the Jews could not execute a prisoner, but had to hand them over to the Romans with a charge that merited the sentence of death. Pilate was the appointed governor of the region where Jesus had been arrested, so he is the one who questioned Jesus in the first 5 verses of chapter 15. One element that shows up in both accounts is the fact that Mark highlights one question in particular in each interrogation. Fill in the table on the next page to consider what this might mean.

| Passage | Interrogator(s) | Major Question | Response |
|---------|-----------------|----------------|----------|
| 14:1-65 |                 |                |          |
| 15:1-5  |                 |                |          |

What do we learn about the reason Jesus was killed, based on these two interrogations?

Why do you think Pilate was ‘amazed’ in v. 5?

Besides Mark 16, no chapter of Mark contains fewer of Christ’s own words than Mark 15. Yet in this chapter, Jesus faced the accusations that condemned him to death (15:3), publicly shamed Him (15:15-20), theologically challenged to reveal his identity (15:31-32), and killed Him (15:33-41). Yet only a handful of words come from Jesus’ mouth. What are they?

Why do you think Jesus didn’t answer these accusations, or defend Himself, or prove His divinity by ‘coming down from the cross’ (15:32)?

Barabbas was a man who had tried to overthrow the Roman government, to free the Jewish people from foreign rule. Why do you think the crowd wanted to have him freed, rather than Jesus?

Throughout Mark's Gospel, the true divine identity of Jesus has been a crucial element of the story. Mark arranged his entire Gospel around Peter's confession in 8:27, and he began his Gospel with Jesus' true identity: "Jesus [the] Christ, the Son of God." In Chapter 15, a significant title is used a number of times (5 times, by my count). What title is this?

In Mark 10: 35-45, Jesus taught his followers that the way to become the 'greatest' of all was to become the least. In a backwards way, the humble will be exalted. With this in mind, what do you think Mark is trying to teach us by emphasizing this 'title' for Christ in Mark 15?

## **Apply**

This passage drives home the fact that Jesus' throne is built on humility and self-sacrificing service to others in order to bring them to God. What is one concrete way that you can bear witness to this world-shattering virtue this week in your own life?

In your Community Group?



# WEEK TEN

## STUDY TWO

Mark 15:33-41

### Pause & Pray

Begin this study by reading this portion of Psalm 70. Remember that we are ‘poor and needy’ in God’s sight. No matter how wealthy and healthy we are, the Bible reminds us of the blessings that we have in Christ. Let David’s words in Psalm 70 do this for you as you ask God to bless our needy hearts and eyes as we approach His Word.

<sup>4</sup>*May all who seek you  
rejoice and be glad in you!  
May those who love your salvation  
say evermore, “God is great!”*  
<sup>5</sup>*But I am poor and needy;  
hasten to me, O God!  
You are my help and my deliverer;  
O LORD, do not delay! (ESV)*

### Read

Today we will study **Mark 15:33-41**, the account of the death of Jesus. Turn there in your Bible and read through the account a few times until you feel you could give a faithful retelling without looking back at the text. When you are prepared, move on to the following questions.

### Study

Mark includes a number of details in chapter 15. Most mystifying is his inclusion of the lineage of Simon of Cyrene, the man who carried Jesus’ cross. The name of his sons adds nothing to the story, and they don’t appear again in the Gospel, yet there they are. In today’s passage, Mark includes

the details of the timing of the darkness over the land, the presence of the female disciples observing from afar, and Jesus' exact words, preserved in Aramaic (*Eloi Eloi...* for which he then provides a helpful translation into Greek). Why do you think Mark was so careful to include all of these details in his account of Jesus' death? What effect do you think it would have had on his original hearers?

Jesus' last recorded words in Mark's Gospel are "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But Jesus wasn't asking a question. He was quoting a Psalm. Scholars have noted that when Scripture was being referred to in the Bible, the speaker or author would refer to one part of the passage he or she had in mind, and through that passage they would expect the reader to remember the entire section they were referring to. Remember that in this time there was no 'versification' so Jesus couldn't say, "Psalm 22:1-31!" Turn to Psalm 22 and read a bit of it to make the connection that Jesus wanted to point out.

What is Psalm 22 about?

A number of features of Jesus' death as recorded in Mark 15 are predicted in Psalm 22. Write down a couple of them here:

What does it mean to be 'forsaken,' as Jesus cried out from the cross?

"Darkness" in Scripture, as is indicated in v. 33, has a specific meaning. Look at Psalm 88:6-7 to get an idea of what darkness is associated with. Record your observations below.

With these things in mind, what do Jesus' last words in Mark tell us about what was happening between Jesus and God the Father as He died on the cross?

In 15:38, Mark tells us that when Jesus died, the curtain in the temple was torn in two. Even if you are familiar with the role of this curtain, read Leviticus 16:1-5 to recall its significance. What was the role of the curtain in the temple?

With this in mind, what is the significance of the temple curtain being torn when Jesus died? (If you aren't sure, visit Hebrews 9:1-14 and write a few sentences below about what you learned there)

Why do you think Mark is careful to note that the curtain was torn "from top to bottom" in verse 38? (Keep in mind that the curtain itself was around 60 feet tall and perhaps as thick as 4 inches)



## Apply

This study guide has often pressed you to take the intellectual insights from the text and make them ‘concrete’ applications in your real life. One of those concrete applications should always be worship. Ask God to impress upon you the significance of this passage, and respond to him in thankful prayer. Consider even singing to him the hymn “Jesus Paid It All.” At Parkview Church, we marvel at the glorious sacrifice of our precious King.

# WEEK ELEVEN

## STUDY ONE

Mark 16:1-8

### Pause & Pray

Begin today's study of Mark's Gospel by meditating on and praying through this portion of Psalm 16:

<sup>7</sup>*I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;  
in the night also my heart instructs me.*

<sup>8</sup>*I have set the LORD always before me;  
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*

<sup>9</sup>*Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;  
my flesh also dwells secure.*

<sup>10</sup>*For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,  
or let your holy one see corruption. (ESV)*

### Read

Today's passage for study is Mark 16:1-8. Read through the passage two or three times before moving on to the questions below.

<sup>1</sup>*When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup>And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?" <sup>4</sup>And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back—it was very large. <sup>5</sup>And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup>And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, 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 that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you." <sup>8</sup>And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and*

*astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. (ESV)*

## **Study**

One thing you might notice about this chapter is that it is very short. It is so short that after Mark wrote it, some people thought he must have gotten the story wrong, and added some material; this is why your Bible might also include verses 9-20, even though these were not the original words written by Mark. In our final study, we will consider why Mark chose to end his Gospel in such fashion. For now, let's study the passage that we have in front of us, Mark 16:1-8.

What do we learn about Jesus from this passage?

Why do you think the women were so afraid?

In this account, Mark has arranged the narrative to make a point about the misunderstanding of the women who travel to Jesus' tomb. What do verses 1-3 tell us about these disciple's misunderstanding about Jesus' identity and mission? (*Hint: look at Jesus' words in 8:31, 9:31, and 10:34*)

In chapter 14, a woman is greatly praised by Jesus because of her bold initiative to spend a great deal of money and anoint Jesus. Mark goes out of his way to indicate that what the

women in Mark 16 is doing is being done along the same lines. Spices, like the 'pure nard' of Jesus' anointing in chapter 14, were very expensive. Mark uses the same word (anoint) here as he does in Mark 14 as well. Yet in this case, it is clear that their costly, bold initiative is mistaken. Why do you think Mark highlights this?

In today's passage, the disciple's misunderstand about Jesus' identity and mission prevents them from spreading the news about Jesus. Keep in mind that from the beginning of the Gospel, Mark has ensured that his readers know all about Jesus' identity and mission (see Mark 1:1). What do you think Mark is trying to teach us about the relationship between knowledge about Jesus and telling others about Jesus?

## **Apply**

What is one concrete way you can faithfully respond to this passage?



# WEEK ELEVEN

## STUDY TWO

Mark 16:6-8

### Pause & Pray

We will complete our study of Mark's Gospel today. It seems fitting since that this is our last study; we ought to conclude by meditating on a benediction- a blessing upon God's people, composed by the author of Hebrews:

*Hebrews 13:20-21 (ESV)*

<sup>20</sup>Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup>equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

### Read

Today we will consider the ending of Mark's Gospel, **Mark 16:6-8**. We will also consider some broader questions about Mark's Gospel. First, read through these verses and also familiarize yourself with their context in Mark 16:1-8. Then move on to the questions below.

### Study

Go back to Mark 16:6-7 and read verse eight again with the young man's words in mind. What do you notice about the disciple's reaction to His words?

In verse seven, the young man commands the female followers of Jesus to 'tell his disciples and Peter...' Why didn't he just say 'his disciples?' Why would Peter not be included?

Despite this exclusion of Peter, he is still invited to join Jesus in Galilee with the other disciples. What do you think this means? (Hint: read John 21:15-19)

We have noted again and again that Mark has no problem with portraying the disciples in the worst possible light. Mark's ending might be the most glaring example of this. Jesus has accomplished the greatest feat in history, coming out of the grave, conquering Satan, sin and death. But this is all lost on his disciples in Mark 16, who are only thinking about how terrified they are. Mark's original audience was under great pressure to deny Christ, facing persecution, torture and death. What effect do you think Mark 16:8 would have had on the original hearers of Mark's Gospel?

Mark presents us with very few examples to follow, since by the end of his Gospel everyone has deserted Jesus. Who does this leave us with to imitate?

If you had to pick one character from Mark's Gospel that you most readily sympathize with, who would it be? Why?

If you had to tell someone the story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection in one paragraph, relying on what you have learned from Mark's Gospel as we have studied, what would you say?

## Apply

What is the most amazing thing you learned about Jesus through Mark's Gospel?

How has this changed your life? (Or, if it hasn't yet, how can you plan to live differently in light of this realization?)

Next-Level Bonus Question: If somehow the entirety of the Bible were lost, except for Mark's Gospel, and someone asked you to tell them what they need to believe in order to be saved, how would you do this from Mark's Gospel alone?