Heartbreak to Hope
Good news from Mark

Let your heartbreak, pain and uncertainty be overcome by Christ’s hope, healing and love.

MELANIE NEWTON
We extend our heartfelt thanks to the women’s ministry team at RockPointe Church for giving us the opportunity to develop and lead this study for women during the spring of 2018. Many thanks also to the women in the classes who helped me to sharpen the discussion surrounding this study of Mark.

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We pray that you and your group will find *Heartbreak to Hope: Good News from Mark* a resource that God will use to strengthen you in your faith walk with God.
Melanie Newton is a Louisiana girl who made the choice to follow Jesus while attending LSU. She and her husband Ron married and moved to Texas for him to attend Dallas Theological Seminary. They stayed in Texas where Ron led a wilderness camping ministry for troubled youth for many years. Ron now helps corporations with their challenging employees and is the author of the top-rated business book, *No Jerks on the Job*.

Melanie jumped into raising three Texas-born children and serving in ministry to women at her church. Through the years, the Lord has given her opportunity to do Bible teaching and to write grace-based Bible studies for women that are now available from her website (melanienewton.com) and on Bible.org. *Graceful Beginnings* books are for anyone new to the Bible. *Joyful Walk Bible Studies* are for maturing Christians.

Melanie is currently a disciple-making trainer with Joyful Walk Ministries. She equips and encourages Christian women everywhere to pursue a lifestyle of disciple-making. Her heart’s desire is to encourage you to have a joyful relationship with Jesus Christ so you are willing to share that experience with others around you.

“Jesus took hold of me in 1972, and I’ve been on this great adventure ever since. My life is a gift of God, full of blessings in the midst of difficult challenges. The more I’ve learned and experienced God’s absolutely amazing grace, the more I’ve discovered my faith walk to be a joyful one. I’m still seeking that joyful walk every day...”

Melanie
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- The 5 C’s of Small Group Leadership: Handbook for small group leaders

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Using This Study Guide

This study guide consists of 11 Lessons covering the gospel of Mark. Since Mark consists of 16 chapters, we will need to cover more than one chapter in most of the lessons. If you cannot do the entire lesson one week, please read the Bible passage covered by the lesson.

THE BASIC STUDY

Each Lesson includes core questions covering the passage narrative. These core questions will take you through the process of inductive Bible study—observation, interpretation, and application. The Inductive process is the best way to study the Bible. The process is more easily understood in the context of answering these questions:

- **What does the passage say?** *(Observation: what’s actually there)* Discover the Facts questions are the observation questions in this study.
- **What does it mean?** *(Interpretation: the author’s intended meaning, leading to what it means for us today)*
- **How does this apply to me today?** *(Application: making it personal)* Heartbreak to Hope questions are the application questions in this study. These questions will lead you to introspection and application of a specific truth to your life.

STUDY ENHANCEMENTS

To aid in proper interpretation and application of the study, five additional study aids are located where appropriate in the Lesson:

- Historical Insights
- Scriptural Insights
- From the Greek/Hebrew (definitions of Greek or Hebrew words)
- Focus on the Meaning
- Think About It (thoughtful reflection)

BIBLE BASICS

The Bible is one book containing a collection of 66 books combined together for our benefit. It is divided into two main parts: Old Testament and New Testament.

The Old Testament tells the story of the beginning of the world and God’s promises to mankind given through the nation of Israel. All the stories and messages in the Old Testament lead up to Jesus Christ’s coming to the earth.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus Christ, the early Christians, and God’s promises to all those who believe in Jesus. You can think of the Old Testament as “before Christ” and the New Testament as “after Christ.”

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters and verses within those chapters to make it easier to study. Verses are like line numbers. Not in the original writings. Bible references include the book name, chapter number and verse number(s). For example, Mark 12:28 refers to the New Testament book of Mark, the 12th chapter, and verse 28 within that 12th chapter. Printed Bibles have a “Table
of Contents” in the front to help you locate books by page number. Bible apps for your phone or tablet also have a contents list by book and chapter.

We will be mostly in the New Testament. It was originally written in Greek. We primarily used the NIV® (New International Version) in the preparation of these Lessons. I recommend that you use one of the more direct English translations of the Bible for your personal study (i.e., NIV, ESV, NAS, NET, NKJ). The NLT (New Living Translation) and the MSG (The Message) versions use modern everyday language to illustrate what a passage is saying and can help you to understand difficult passages. You can find all these translations in most Bible Apps or online at various websites such as biblegateway.com and Bible.com.

This study capitalizes certain pronouns referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit—He, Him, His, Himself—just to make the reading of the study information less confusing. Some Bible translations likewise capitalize those pronouns referring to God; others do not. It is simply a matter of preference, not a requirement.

**NEW TESTAMENT SUMMARY**

The New Testament opens with the births of John (the Baptist) and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance as well as when a Gentile (non-Jew) converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus, God’s incarnate Son, publicly showed the world what God is like and taught His perfect ways for 3 – 3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue Christ’s earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind’s sin, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven.

The account of Jesus’s earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels (the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account).

After Jesus’s return to heaven, the followers of Christ were then empowered by the Holy Spirit and spread God’s salvation message among the Jews, a number of whom believed in Christ. The apostle Paul and others carried the good news to the Gentiles during 3 missionary journeys (much of this recorded in the book of Acts).

Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters to churches & individuals (Romans through Philemon). The section in our Bible from Hebrews to Jude contains 8 additional letters penned by five men, including two apostles (Peter and John) and two of Jesus’s half-brothers (James and Jude). The author of Hebrews is unknown.

The apostle John also recorded Revelation, a summary of God’s final plan for our world. The Bible ends as it began with a new, sinless creation.
DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDELINES

1. **Attend consistently** whether your Lesson is done or not. You’ll learn from the other women, and they want to get to know you.

2. **Set aside time** to work through the study questions. The goal of Bible study is to get to know Jesus. He will change your life.

3. **Share your insights** from your personal study time. As you spend time in the Bible, Jesus will teach you truth through His Spirit inside you.

4. **Respect each other’s insights.** Listen thoughtfully. Encourage each other as you interact. Refrain from dominating the discussion if you have a tendency to be talkative. 😊

5. **Celebrate our unity** in Christ. Avoid bringing up controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues, and denominational differences.

6. **Maintain confidentiality.** Remember that anything shared during the group time is not to leave the group (unless permission is granted by the one sharing).

7. **Pray for one another** as sisters in Christ.

8. **Get to know the women** in your group. Please do not use your small group members for solicitation purposes for home businesses, though.

   *Enjoy your Joyful Walk Bible Study!*
Lesson 1: Silence Is Broken at Last!

Day One Study
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

The ABCs of 2nd Corinthians—Author, Background, and Context
Like any book you read, it always helps to know a bit about the author, the background setting for the story (i.e., past, present, future), and where the book fits into a series (that’s the context). The same is true of Bible books.

Author — John Mark
Since earliest times, John Mark was known to be the author of this gospel. It was common at the time for Jews to have two names. John was his Hebrew name; Mark was his Greek/Roman name. It is thought that he was from a wealthy family. In Mark 14:51-52, Mark may have written a veiled reference to himself since no other gospel writer mentions this incident. He describes a young man, likely a teenager, in a linen garment (his underwear, evidence of being wealthy) who followed Jesus out to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Mark was part of the Jerusalem church community, where he listened to the apostles’ teaching. At times, the church would gather at his mother’s house to pray. About 11 years after the resurrection, Mark left Jerusalem with his cousin Barnabas to go to Antioch in Syria. There, Barnabas and Paul headed up a growing church filled with non-Jews (“Gentiles”).

Two years later, Mark traveled with Barnabas and Paul on their first missionary journey to Cyprus. A year later, when they got to what we know as southern Turkey, Mark left them and headed back to Jerusalem. We don’t know the reasons behind his departure.

Three years later (as a 30-something), Barnabas and Paul were planning to head out on their second missionary trip. Barnabas wanted to take his cousin Mark. Paul said no, remembering how Mark had deserted them. Barnabas wanted to continue mentoring his cousin so he took Mark with him to Cyprus again. Paul took Silas and headed north to Turkey.

For the next 15-20 years, Mark traveled with Peter, listening to Peter’s sermons and recording them. Peter probably had the greatest influence on Mark. When Mark was around 50, an aging Peter calls him “my son” in the letter we know as 1 Peter, written from Rome.

By this time, Mark’s relationship with Paul was restored. Both times when Paul is in prison in Rome, Mark is there with him. Paul calls Mark his fellow worker and very useful to him. It is generally believed that Mark adapted Peter’s preaching and teachings about Jesus into the book we now call “Mark,” arranged and shaped as he was guided by the Holy Spirit. So, the young teen who knew Jesus as a youth had many experiences that shaped his life and led him to the work that God had in mind for him. (References to Mark in the New Testament are found in Acts 12:12; 13:4-5, 13; 15:36-41; Colossians 4:10-11; 2 Timothy 4:9-11 and 1 Peter 5:13)

Background — Written from Rome to Roman Gentile Christians
Since Mark was with both Peter and Paul in Rome, we can be confident that he wrote his book from there. Most of the Roman Christians were non-Jews (Gentiles) who were definitely not familiar with the Old Testament and spoke Latin, not Hebrew. So, Mark uses Latin terms, explains Jewish customs, and leaves out Old Testament quotes and genealogies. He also explains the Aramaic words that Jesus spoke (similar to Hebrew).
The Romans were designers, engineers, doers, slaveholders, soldiers, conquerors, and partiers. Because they were such action-oriented people, Mark writes in an action style. He frequently uses the words “immediately” and “right away”—7 times in chapter 1 alone. He writes mostly in the present tense when relating the stories of Christ so it feels like they are happening right now. He uses descriptive words and paints vivid word pictures so it feels like you are there in the crowd. In fact, because Mark briefly describes scenes and activities, he is called the photographer of the gospels. Each section of writing is like a snapshot from Jesus’s life. Think slideshow, Facebook or Instagram.

Mark was aware of the suffering that the Roman Christians were beginning to experience under the Roman Emperor named Nero—a cruel, crazy guy. This book was written when persecution against Christians was just starting in Nero’s reign. There are lots of references to suffering throughout Mark.

CONTEXT — WHERE IT FITS INTO THE BIBLE

When you look at your Bible’s table of contents, the first 4 books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are called the “Gospels” (meaning “good news,” referring to the good news about Jesus). The Gospels tell of the life of Jesus from different perspectives. Mark is thought to be the first gospel written though it’s not listed first in the New Testament. Matthew and Luke were written a couple of years after Mark and share a lot of the same content. John was written after all three.

The basic outline of Mark can be found in Peter’s sermon from Acts 10:36-43—John’s baptism, Jesus’s miracles and teaching, the crucifixion, the resurrection, then go and tell the good news.

Mark answers two significant questions in his writing: 1) Who is Jesus? 2) How can I follow Jesus even when it’s tough?

1. What grabbed your attention as you read the ABC’s of the book of Mark?

Heartbreak to Hope

This world is full of heartache and pain. Human distress is everywhere around us. Chronic illness. Persecution. Poverty. Unrealized dreams. Job struggles. Women and men are in bondage to guilt, fear, destructive behavior, and fatigue due to the burden of responsibilities. Broken relationships leave people with a sense of rejection, worthlessness and extreme loneliness. Add to those any feelings of uncertainty often revealed by the questions we ask about life. “When will I __________ (make a friend, find love, get married, have a baby, get a better job, etc.)?” “What will I do after __________ (graduation, my children grow up, this job ends, etc.)?” Where do you go for help?

Sadly, if you have been taught that God doesn’t care or is punishing you for something you’ve done wrong, you aren’t likely to trust Him for help. This may leave you feeling empty, confused, and without meaning and purpose. The Bible describes that as being “without hope and without God in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). Hopeless. Godless. A miserable existence characterized by heartbreak. But God looked upon your life with compassion and provided a solution—His Son Jesus Christ. God in the flesh. God on earth. The God of hope and love.
Jesus understands every single one of your heartaches. He experienced human life for more than 30 years. He gets your physical pain, rejection, strained relationships, abuse, grief, and impatience because those were part of His life as well. When you go to Him in prayer, you can trust that He understands, that He knows how you are feeling and what your needs are at that moment.

Jesus interacted with men and women everywhere He went. And, there were so many who had heartaches and pain, filled with uncertainty about their future. Jesus looked upon the crowds of people with compassion. He not only felt their need but also wanted to do something about it. Jesus Christ’s plan to meet that need for every person was then, and is now, Himself.

Jesus is the light that gives you hope for every heartbreak that you experience.

All around us it is easy to see the darkness present in this world. Wickedness, greed, selfishness, cold-blooded violence... the darkness can quickly overwhelm a soul. But there is hope! Isaiah 9:2 predicted that those living in darkness would see a great light. Jesus was that light. And when you look at His life in the Gospel books you can see that He broke the darkness that was present in His land. He healed sick people, taught the curious how to live a life of purpose, and forgave the sins of those who were longing to be free from their guilt. He still does the same today. Our world is not completely dark. There is light that always dawns. (John Newton, Advent for Restless Hearts, p. 18)

Through this study of the gospel of Mark you will learn about Jesus’s life on earth, how He related to people and why knowing Him brings hope to your life. Let your heartbreak, pain and uncertainty be overcome by Christ’s hope, healing and love.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

2. What heartaches do you have right now? What is causing you pain? Where is your uncertainty?

Ask Jesus to overcome your heartbreak, pain and uncertainty with His hope, healing and love as you learn from the gospel of Mark.

**Process of Bible Study**

The inductive process is the best way to study the Bible. It includes 3 elements:

- **Observation**: What does it say? (What is in the biblical text as you read it) **Discover the Facts** questions in this study are observation questions.

- **Interpretation**: What does it mean? (The author’s intended meaning to his audience, leading to what it means for us today)

- **Application**: What application can you make to life today? (What you learn personally) **Heartbreak to Hope** questions in this study are application questions.
We will spend a lot of our time on observation—seeing what’s actually there. Sometimes, we will seek understanding of the author’s intended meaning through additional study. You want to understand the passage before you try to apply it. It helps to have access to great resources to help with interpretation. Here are some online study resources that I use and can recommend.

- [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org) (write out your question, follow “rabbit trails”)
- [bible.org](http://bible.org) (search for more detail about subjects)
- [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org) or Blue Letter Bible app (translation comparisons, Greek word meanings, cross references)
- [soniclight.com](http://soniclight.com) (check out Dr. Constable’s Study Notes on Mark)

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

**Day Two Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

3. Recall a time when you announced the good news that something, for which you had been waiting a long time, was finally going to take place. What was the news? Whom did you tell? How did you feel?

**Setting the Stage**

During the 600 years before the birth of Jesus, the Jewish people had gone through a lot of harsh experiences. After being sent by God to exile in Babylon for 70 years, they came back to their land only to be ruled by other nations—Persia, Greece, Egypt and Syria respectively. The last rulers were especially cruel. Some Jews revolted which led to about 100 years of independence. Then, Rome conquered the nation. By the time Jesus began His public ministry, Israel had been under Roman rule for 90 years. The people were impatient to get out of their bondage to Rome.

There had also been 400 years of “silence” from God. No prophets had been speaking or writing anything from God to the people during that time. But, the last Old Testament prophet Malachi had promised this:

“I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty…See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you.” (Malachi 3:1; 4:5).
As the New Testament opens, Israel’s king was Herod the Great who was not of Jewish descent. The Jewish priesthood was politically appointed and no longer from the God-chosen line of Aaron. The overall mood of the people was one of despondency because they felt like they were still in captivity.

Yet, good things were happening to prepare the way for Jesus. Synagogues, community places of worship that developed during the Exile, had sprouted up all over the country making weekly worship accessible to all the people. The Old Testament scriptures were translated into Greek, the common language of the Roman Empire, so were more accessible to all communities of people where Jews met together. And God soon ended the 400 years of silence in a big way although only a few people knew what was happening.

4. Skim Luke 1 and 2. During the 30 years before the Jewish people as a nation finally heard from Him again, what was God at work doing?

Read Mark 1:1-13.

God breaks His silence by sending a prophet named John. We know him as John the Baptist, the one who prepared the way for Israel’s Messiah to be revealed.

5. Right away in verse 1, how does Mark answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” [Note: We’ll see it answered twice more in this Lesson.]

Scriptural Insight: Messiah comes from the Hebrew word mashiach, meaning “anointed one” or “chosen one.” The Greek equivalent is the word Christos or, in English, Christ. The name “Jesus Christ” is the same as “Jesus the Messiah.” In biblical times, anointing with oil was a sign that God was consecrating that person for a particular role. Thus, an “anointed one” was someone with a special, God-ordained purpose. The Jews of Jesus’s day expected the Messiah to redeem Israel by overthrowing the rule of the Romans and establishing an earthly kingdom. It wasn’t until after Jesus’s resurrection that His disciples finally began to understand that the Messiah would first deliver His people spiritually; that is, to redeem them from sin. Later, Jesus the Messiah will deliver His people from their physical enemies, when He sets up His Kingdom on the earth. (“What does Messiah mean?” accessed at www.gotquestions.org)

6. Discover the Facts: Let’s focus on vv. 1-8 today. The following questions will help you answer the observation question, “What does it say?”

What does God promise to send (v. 2)?

For whom is the messenger preparing the way (v. 3)?
Knowing this, who is John?

What is John doing in the wilderness (v. 4)?

Who is coming to the wilderness (v. 5)?

What did John wear and eat (v. 6)?

What was also his message (vv. 7-8)?

7. John is preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Let’s define these words.
   - What does the word *baptism* mean?

   - What does the word *repentance* mean?

   - What does the word *forgiveness* mean?

**Focus on the Meaning:** The word *baptism* carried with it the picture of both cleansing and identification. When Gentiles chose to become Jews, they were baptized to be cleansed of all pagan impurity and to identify with the Jews in being part of the Mosaic Covenant. Native Jews were not baptized before this time. Repentance represented changing one’s mind about sin. Repentance was an act of mourning one’s sin because it broke God’s heart. The result of repentance was changing one’s behavior to not do that sin any longer. Jews knew about repentance. But, the normal practice for receiving forgiveness of sins came from the shedding of blood through animal sacrifices (Hebrews 9:22).
8. So, what were the people recognizing in their lives when they responded to John’s call for repentance and, thus, to be baptized?

9. Read Malachi 4:5-6. What did God promise to the people?

10. Read 2 Kings 1:8 and compare what you read with how John is described in Mark 1:6. What message was John conveying to the people? See also Malachi 3:1; 4:5.

11. In Mark 1:7-8, Mark again answers the question, “Who is Jesus?” What does John say about the one coming?

12. Heartbreak to Hope: Why would listening to John’s preaching in the wilderness give hope to the people who came to hear him?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
DAY THREE STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 1:1-13.

13. **Discover the Facts:** Focus on vv. 9-11. A lot of truth is packed into these three verses.

   Where was Jesus (v. 9)?

   What did Jesus see (v. 10)?

   What did God the Father say to God the Son (v. 11)?

14. Jesus never did sin. Why did He come to be baptized? [Review the “Focus on the Meaning” in Day Two.]

15. Read John 1:32-34. What was one purpose for the Spirit descending on Jesus in a visible “dove” form?

**Scriptural Insight:** While confirming that there is only one true God, believers have worshiped Jesus Christ and have spoken of Him in terms appropriate only of deity from the earliest days of Christianity (first century A.D.). The Holy Spirit is also known as deity. So, the only conclusion is that the Bible clearly teaches three Divine Persons, each rightly called God, yet all the one and same God. The doctrine of the *Trinity* (or "Tri-unity," a man-made label) is then a summary of the teachings of the Bible regarding the nature of God. God is one in essence, three in Person. It is an unexplainable reality, part of the mystery of God. All three persons of the Trinity are present at the baptism of Jesus. You can consider this event as Jesus's commissioning for ministry. All three persons are united in the mission set forth for Jesus.

16. Read John 8:29. What does Jesus say about His own goal in life?
17. Did you notice that God the Father told His Son that He was well pleased with Him before Jesus’s ministry even began? What does this reveal about God’s love for His Son for the 30 years before this day?

18. Heartbreak to Hope: Have you had to wait for something for a very long time? Did you think God was being lazy or had forgotten you? Maybe He was preparing the background for answering your prayer as He did during the 30 years before Jesus showed up for all to see. Can you look back now and recognize how God was at work on your behalf or for someone you love?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

Read “God Works in the Background of Life” at the end of this lesson for additional insight.
DAY FOUR STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 1:1-13.

19. According to Mark 1:12-13, what happens next and why?

20. Who helped Jesus (v. 13)?

   **Historical Insight:** Mark mentions Jesus being in the presence of wild animals. Considering his Christian audience in Rome knew of the fights to the death involving humans versus wild animals in the Colosseum, perhaps Mark was showing how Jesus could identify with them in that way, too.

21. What else interests you from Mark 1:1-13?

22. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Reflect back on this whole lesson, how did someone experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty find hope, healing and love?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
God Works in the Background of Life

Have you had to wait for a very long time for God to answer a specific prayer of yours? You know that what you are asking is within His will. It matches up with what is promised in Scripture. But, it’s not happening. Did you think God was being lazy or had forgotten you?

Maybe God has been preparing the background for answering your prayer today or in the future.

That’s what God did for the Jews during the years before Jesus showed up for all to see. We celebrate Christmas beginning with Luke 1 and 2—the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. But, have you ever considered that God started preparing for Christmas hundreds of years before?

As I was working on this Bible Study of the gospel of Mark, I was reminded of the many things God did during the 500 years before Jesus came that not only made Jesus’s ministry more effective but also enhanced the spread of the gospel after the resurrection.

God was at work in the background to prepare the way for answering the prayers of His people for deliverance.

The Synagogue

God promised Israel a Messiah, an anointed one from Him, who would be their deliverer and their king. But, in 586 BC, Israel found herself in exile in Babylon because of her idolatry. The people were cut off from their temple, divested of nationhood and surrounded by pagan religious practices. They couldn’t depend on those travels to Jerusalem for festivals and sacrifices a few times a year to satisfy their spiritual needs. In their places of exile, though, they carried their scriptures with them, especially the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament (Acts 15:21). The Jews met together in community groups for worship and reading of their Scriptures in what we now know as synagogues.

As a result, Judaism became a faith that could be practiced wherever the Torah could be carried. This helped to not only preserve Judaism but also prepared the way for the Christian gospel. The Diaspora (dispersion) of Israel begun in the exile accelerated during the years that followed so that by Jesus’s time Jews literally filled every land.

Jews outside Palestine concentrated their religious life in the study of the Torah and the life of the synagogue. God-fearing Gentiles joined the Jews for the weekly worship times.

As Israel went into captivity, they disseminated the knowledge of the living and the true God. From then on, they walked the highways of the world, carrying a pack, doing business, building synagogues in every place, telling out: “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God is one LORD.” That was their mission. All was preparation for the coming of the Messiah. (Dr. J. Vernon McGee, How God Prepared the World for the First Coming of Christ)

The missionaries of the early church began their Gentile ministries among those dispersed Jews, using the weekly synagogue meetings as the platform for sharing the good news about Jesus.

Through the dispersion of Jews and the development of the synagogue, God was at work in the background to prepare the way for answering the prayers of the people for their Messiah to come to deliver them.

A Common Language

Do you remember Alexander the Great from your world history studies? Not only did he conquer lots of territory from Greece eastward, but this action also spread the Greek language and culture to all those conquered nations.
For the next 200 years, just about everyone learned to speak and write Greek. And, all the ancient documents were translated into Greek including the Old Testament ~200 B.C. This Greek version of the Old Testament scriptures is called “The Septuagint” (from the Latin meaning, “seventy”) because it was prepared by 70 scholars in 70 days. Guess what? Most of those people meeting in synagogues around the Mediterranean Sea were using the Septuagint as their Scriptures.

Alexander took Greek civilization to the ends of the earth, and may I say that he accomplished a purpose: God was disseminating a language that was to become the vehicle of the gospel, the Greek language. (Dr. J. Vernon McGee, How God Prepared the World for the First Coming of Christ)

Paul and other New Testament writers wrote in Greek which could be read everywhere in those countries influenced by the Greek culture.

Through the spread of the Greek empire, God was at work in the background to prepare the way for answering the prayers of His people for deliverance.

**Roman Roads and “Peace”**

In the century before Jesus was born, Rome conquered Israel and the rest of the countries surrounding the Mediterranean. And, they brought “peace” to the whole region, albeit a forced peace. Law and order prevailed. Anyone who rebelled was quickly squashed.

The Romans were into major construction not only of magnificent buildings but also of roads so people could travel from the farthest reaches of the Empire back to mother Rome. This facilitated travel and communication between towns along these roadways. Paul and the other missionaries of the first century utilized these roads for their travel as well as the many shipping options available to them for sea travel.

Through the activity of the Romans, God was at work in the background to prepare the way for answering the prayers of all people for deliverance.

**Babies Must Be Born and Grow Up**

Thirty years before the Jewish people as a nation finally heard from Him again, God was at work again. The angel Gabriel delivered the message to two people that their sons would be the ones through whom God would answer the prayers of His people for deliverance.

But, before that time, the babies had to be born, experience childhood, and grow up into men prepared to do their work. That took 30+ more years of waiting. Only a few people knew what was going on during this time. And, they didn’t really understand it. But, they did their part in the preparation.

John the Baptist appeared on the scene at the appointed time. Jesus left his carpenter’s shop a short time later and began His full-time ministry of teaching the people about getting ready for the Kingdom of God to come to them and healing them of their sicknesses.

Through normal human birth and development, God was at work in the background to prepare the way for answering the prayers of all people for deliverance.

**God is at work in the background for you, too.**

I can look back and see how God was at work in the background preparing the way for answering some of my specific prayers that were within His will. It took time. I had to wait. But, the wait was worth it, and I praise Him for what He did during that time of waiting.

Can you look back now and recognize how God was at work on your behalf or for someone you love? Praise Him for that.
Are you still waiting for God to answer a specific prayer of yours? You know that what you are asking is within His will. It matches up with what is promised in Scripture. But, it's not happening. Maybe God has been preparing the background for answering your prayer today or in the future. Trust Him.

**Reflect and Respond**
Lesson 2: Friends, Family, and Fast-spreading News
(Mark 1:14-45)

Day One Study
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 1:13-20.
Between verses 13 and 14, Mark switched from John’s work to focus on Jesus’s ministry instead. He skipped about a year of Jesus’s public ministry in Judea (covered in John chapters 1-4). During that year, Jesus began to gain followers as He proclaimed the nearness of the kingdom of God that the Jews had been wanting for so long.

1. Discover the Facts: After John is put into prison, all eyes are now on Jesus.
   - Where did Jesus go (v. 14)?
   - What message did Jesus proclaim in vv. 14-15?
   - Was this different than what John had proclaimed (see Matthew 3:2)?
   - How should someone get ready (v. 15)?

   Think About It: Jesus didn't say they needed to get ready for the coming kingdom by gathering their swords, axes, or other weapons. He said they must repent and believe the good news. There’s that word “repent” again. To repent means to change your unbelief to belief, to mourn your sins and choose God’s way of approaching life.

   - Who does Jesus see as He walks by the Sea of Galilee (vv. 16, 19)?
   - What does Jesus say to Simon and Andrew (v. 17)?
   - What was their responsibility?
Focus on the Meaning: His invitation to all these men was two-fold. 1) To follow Jesus. That phrase literally means, “to come alongside or walk the same road.” He was challenging them to be His disciples. Rabbis had disciples. This relationship lasted for months or years. Disciples learn from their “rabbis” and apply what they learn to their lives. 2) Fishers of people—they would be disciple-makers. Fishing is a transferable concept. Their tools and skills for fishing would be transferred to targeting and reaching people in Jesus’s plan. He would give them training and opportunities. Plus, hanging out together would foster intimacy in their relationship with Jesus.

What was the response of all 4 men (vv. 18, 20)?

2. Read John 1:35-42. What was Jesus’s first interaction with the brothers Simon and Andrew?

Scriptural Insight: We know from Mark 1:20 that James and John were the sons of Zebedee. From the lists of the women near the cross (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40 and John 19:25), we can conclude that the mother of Zebedee’s children was named Salome and that she was also Mary’s (Jesus’s mother) sister. That makes her Jesus’s aunt, and her sons (James and John) would be Jesus’s first cousins. So, Jesus knew all 4 of these men before this day recorded in Mark 1.

3. Read Luke 5:4-7. What did Jesus give them so they could follow Him immediately?

Historical Insight: Fishing from the Sea of Galilee was a lucrative business. The lake teemed with big fish so the fishermen were prosperous. Peter, Andrew, James and John made a good living. They would have dried, pickled and preserved their fish, then sold it to merchants who delivered it to other parts of the Roman world by way of Rome’s extensive highway system. Zebedee, his sons, and Simon and Andrew were partners in the fishing business. Jesus gave them so much fish that this likely provided resources for their families for months!

The 2009 movie Julie and Julia is a great illustration of disciple-making. The move portrays young Julie Powell becoming a disciple of the chef Julia Child through Julia’s cookbook, Mastering the Art of French Cooking. As a disciple, Julie studies the recipes and follows the procedures. She
experiences the joy of cooking and eating delicious food as Julia taught her through the book. Julie got to know Julia Child “personally” though they never met. In a sense, Julie “followed” Julia. Julie didn’t keep what she was learning about cooking to herself, though. She wrote a blog, bringing others along with her. Then, she wrote a book that was turned into a movie. Many women bought Julia Child’s book and started cooking through it because of Julie’s influence. That’s disciple-making. While she was following Julia Child as her disciple, Julie Powell was introducing other people to Julia, sharing what she was learning so they could cook that way, too. Julie was a follower and a disciple-maker at the same time. That’s what Jesus wants from us, too—to be followers of Him and disciple-makers for Him at the same time.

4. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Christianity is Christ—all about a relationship with Him. It’s not a society, an organization, or a set of rules. It’s a relationship-based new way to approach life with freedom and joy.

   - Like Peter, Andrew, James and John, have you already made the decision to trust in Christ for your salvation and follow Him?

   - Perhaps you don’t have a relationship with Christ and would like to understand what it’s all about. This is the “Good News” about Jesus (often called the Gospel message):

     God created you to enjoy a relationship with Himself. Sadly, your sin (the ways you have gone against what God wants for you) has separated you from a holy God and caused spiritual death in you. But, God gave His Son, Jesus Christ, who became human, lived a perfect life, died, and was resurrected to pay sin’s death penalty. You receive God’s gift of forgiveness of your sin by trusting in Jesus as the Son of God who died to take away your sin. At that moment, you receive eternal life and begin a new relationship with Christ. And you gain a new purpose in life, which is to follow Him and enjoy Him forever.

     Are you ready to trust in Jesus Christ now?

     *Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
DAY TWO STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 1:21-28.

5. **Discover the Facts:** Mark introduced his readers to the teachers of the law (also known as lawyers or scribes). These men were like modern lawyers or seminary professors, proficient in their subject area—in this case, the Mosaic Law. The teachers of the law usually quoted other people. But, Jesus taught with His own authority (vv. 22, 27).

What did Jesus do on the Sabbath (v. 21)?

How did the people respond (v. 22)?

Who was in the audience (v. 23)?

What did “he” say (v. 24)?

Jesus told the evil spirit to “be quiet,” which literally means “be muzzled” (v. 25). How did the demon respond, showing it was still in rebellion (v. 26)?

How did the watching audience respond (v. 27)?

Then, what happened (v. 28)?

**Scriptural Insight:** The unclean or evil spirit was a demon. Demons were angels created at the beginning of creation. One rebelled against God and took 1/3 of the angels with him (Luke 10:18; Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 12:3-9). We know that rebel leader as Satan, “the accuser.” Demons are under him as angels in rebellion against God. They do everything they can to thwart the purpose of God, gaining control over people through deception, counterfeits, fear, manipulation, and torment. It seems that during Jesus’s life on earth Satan launched a counter attack through demonic possession of individuals. The evil spirit identified Jesus correctly. Jesus as the Son of God had the power to destroy them; He was their adversary as the Holy One of God. He defeated the enemy by driving out demons, demonstrating His authority over all the spirit world—the good angels who served Him plus Satan and his demonic forces. Jesus is more powerful than Satan and any demon. Nothing good can come from demons, which may be why Jesus commanded them to be silent about His identity.
6. **Heartbreak to Hope**: What in today’s study speaks to your heart?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

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**Day Three Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 1:29-34**

7. **Discover the Facts**: We think news travels fast today. But, it traveled fast 2000 years ago. From noon to sunset, the word spread that Jesus was in town, and He had healed someone. Answer these questions based on what is in the text.

- Who left the synagogue with Jesus and where did they go (v. 29)?

  What did they find there (v. 30)?

- How did Jesus respond to that news (v. 31)?

  What was her response back to Him?

- Who showed up at Peter’s door that evening (vv. 32-33)?

**Scriptural Insight**: In Scripture, a miracle is an act of God that cannot be explained by natural means. God’s purpose for miracles in the Bible seems to be three-fold. 1) To authenticate the messenger and, therefore, the message. Jesus’s miracles showed that He is God. He has authority. The Kingdom is in His presence. 2) To demonstrate God’s
compassion for His people. We will repeatedly see how Jesus’s miracles certainly did that.

3) To show the power of God. Only God’s power can do the things that Jesus did. Jesus is God on earth.

God still heals today, instantly or through enabling the body to heal itself. But, He makes no blanket promise to do so during this time in which we live. Where God chooses to allow affliction and trouble to remain in our lives, He promises hope through comfort and through teaching us how to depend on Him. We learn to trust Him with what He chooses to do.

Read Mark 1:35-39.

8. **Discover the Facts:** Jesus makes a few intentional choices. See what they are in this passage.

   What did Jesus do the next morning (v. 35)?

   When the disciples found Him, what did they say (v. 37)?

   What was Jesus’s plan that fit with His purpose (v. 38)?

   What did he do (v. 39)?

The people of Capernaum would have kept Him there as their in-house healer. Jesus knew His purpose was beyond that. He wanted to get the message out. A relationship with God was more important than just physical healing. He traveled to all the little towns in the region, each about a mile or two apart, and taught in the synagogues. This time of travel probably lasted a couple of months.

9. **Heartbreak to Hope:** If Jesus needed time alone with God and intentionally made that happen, we need it far more. That personal time with God is often called a “quiet time.” Read the following quote than answer the questions below it.

   **Think About It:** In her book, "A Practical Guide to Prayer," Dorothy Haskins tells about a noted concert violinist who was asked the secret of her mastery of the instrument. The woman answered the question with two words, "PLANNED NEGLECT." Then she explained, "There were many things that used to demand my time. When I went to my room after breakfast, I made my bed, straightened the room, dusted and did whatever seemed necessary. When I finished my work, I turned to my violin practice. That system prevented me from accomplishing what I should on the violin. So, I reversed things. I deliberately planned to neglect everything else until my practice period was complete. And that program of planned neglect is the secret of my success."
There are many good things we can choose to do with our day. Unless we discipline ourselves and make a deliberate effort, good things and the tyranny of the urgent rob us of spending time with God in Bible reading and prayer. Reflect on how you spend your day. What do you do or can you do to intentionally withdraw from activity to be alone with God and His Word? What “Planned Neglect” could you practice?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

**Day Four Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 1:40-45.**

10. **Discover the Facts:** A man came to Jesus with a great need.

A man with leprosy came to Jesus and asked what (v. 40)?

The leper had faith in Jesus’s ability to heal him, recognizing God’s choice not questioning God’s ability. How did Jesus respond to the man (v. 41)?

**Focus on the Meaning:** In v. 41, “compassion (NIV)” is a better translation than “pity (ESV).” Jesus felt compassion for the man. Compassion means that you are moved with a desire to do something to help. It is not just feeling sorry for someone. How long had it been since someone touched the leper? The Jews were concerned about becoming ceremonially unclean if they touched someone sick. Uncleanness was not sin. But, it restricted their interaction with others in the community and their attendance at the synagogue until they were purified through passage of time (a new day) or an offering. Others would be made ceremonially unclean if they touched the leper, but nothing made Jesus unclean.

After being healed, what instructions did Jesus give to the man (vv. 43-44)?
What happened instead (v. 45)?

**Scriptural Insight:** Why did Jesus tell people not to speak about their healing? It could be for several reasons: 1) Jesus did not want to be considered just a miracle worker, (2) He did not want His teaching ministry hindered by too much publicity being given to His healing miracles, and (3) He did not want His death to come prematurely, i.e., before He had finished His ministry. *(NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition, note on Matthew 8:4, p. 1453)*

11. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Crowds were everywhere begging for Jesus to do something all the time. It probably felt for Him like it does for us at a sold-out concert or athletic event. If you are a parent or teacher, the crowds were like children who won’t leave you alone or who continually pester you about something. Or, perhaps this is how you feel at work, constantly surrounded by people with needs. Jesus understands how you feel. He’s been there. Do you have confidence in that?

12. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Reflect back on this whole lesson, how did someone experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty find hope, healing and love?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
Lesson 3: Forgiving, Calling, Claiming, & Appointing

(Mark 2:1-3:19)

Jesus knew our greatest need. It wasn’t health or wealth. It was removal of the sin barrier between us and God. The needs of the heart trump the physical needs. He presents this to the people in His interaction with those who seem to ignore this truth or think they can’t be worthy in God’s sight.

Day One Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 2:1-12.

Historical Insight: Capernaum was a fairly large town with about 1500 residents and the major center of trade and commerce in Galilee. The international trade route from Egypt through Palestine to Syria and Mesopotamia passed nearby. Caravans came through with travelers and merchants from many nations and stations of life—not only Jews but non-Jews (also called Gentiles). It was also a tax collecting center for the Romans. Travelers and merchants had to stop and pay a tax on their way through town. Fishermen and farmers had to pay a tax when they sent out their products. So, a lot of tax collectors were headquartered in Capernaum—like Levi in Mark 2. Roman soldiers were stationed there to keep peace at this busy intersection.

The climate was so good that the locals thought of Capernaum as a “paradise.” Palm trees grew along the boulevards. Fruits and vegetables multiplied so the farmers were prosperous as were the fishermen. Nearly everyone lived on the same level economically. Jesus adopted Capernaum as His hometown and the center of His ministry in Galilee. Five of His 12 disciples came from there. It was an ideal place for Jesus to spread out His message. And, the inhabitants of Capernaum had many opportunities to see and hear Jesus.

1. Discover the Facts: It is generally thought that Peter’s house in Capernaum was Jesus’s home base. Since Peter was married (Mark 1:30; 1 Corinthians 9:5), see what is happening here through the eyes of his wife (Mrs. Peter). Picture crowds inside and outside the house.

What news did the people hear (v. 1)?

What is the situation in the house (v. 2)?

What is Jesus doing?

What happens next (vv. 3-4)?
What does He see and say (v. 5)?

Who was also present and watching (v. 6)?

What were they thinking (vv. 6-7)?

What does Jesus know about them (v. 8)?

What does He say (v. 9)?

Why does He then heal the man (vv. 10-11)?

What is the healed man’s response (v. 12)?

What is the crowd’s response?

**Historical Insight:** The Pharisees were an influential group of ~6000 men whose goal for about 150 years was that Israel would stay true to Judaism and never go back to idolatry. So, they emphasized keeping every bit of the law of Moses plus 100s of man-made laws. Since the Pharisees found that other Jews were not careful enough keeping those laws, they looked on other people as tainted by sin and, therefore, to be avoided. By Jesus’s day, they had become so self-satisfied with their law-keeping that they were hard-hearted to the things of God and His people. The “teachers of the law” (also called “scribes” or “lawyers”) were like today’s seminary professors since many of them taught in the Jerusalem seminary.

2. What did the 4 men think that their paralyzed friend’s most important need was? How do you know?
3. What did Jesus think was the man’s most important need? How do you know?

**Scriptural Insight:** This is an illustration of the difference between real needs and felt needs. Whereas the paralyzed man’s felt need was his need to walk again, his real need was to remove the barrier of sin that separated him from God. In Jesus’s mind, the man’s real need trumped his physical needs. Jesus took care of his real need first then his felt need. We see him doing this by teaching crowds of people everywhere He went about a relationship with God even while healing those who were sick.

4. How do Jesus’s action and words in vv. 8-9 answer the question asked silently in v. 7?

5. What is missing in the religious leaders’ attitude toward the paralyzed man?

**Think About It:** The Jews in bondage to Rome longed for the Kingdom. Jesus offered them the Kingdom and freedom from their bondage to sin. Many rejected it.

6. **Heartbreak to Hope:** The Pharisees and teachers of the law are always watching Jesus, always finding fault with Him. How do you feel about someone who always finds fault with you? Jesus gets it. He dealt with it every day.


**Historical Insight:** Tax collectors sat at a tollbooth along the highways collecting Roman taxes on toll roads and customs on merchandise. They were considered greedy, on a get-rich-quick path to success since they could exact a surcharge on people, charging up to 4 times the tax fee itself. Because they were in collusion with the Romans, they were hated
by most Jews as cheats and traitors. The tax collectors and their wives were not permitted to attend the synagogue. So, they formed their own social group. As to skills, tax collectors were educated men who could write in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. They carried an inkwell and paper with them to use for record-keeping. The fact that Levi has two names—Levi Matthew—speaks to his wealth and prominence in the community. You will see throughout the gospels that tax collectors were drawn to Jesus.

13. **Discover the Facts:** Jesus calls another man to become His disciple—Levi, whom we know better as Matthew, the writer of the gospel by that name.

What is happening (v. 13)?

Who does Jesus see (v. 14)?

When Jesus says, “Follow me,” how does Levi respond (v. 14)?

**Think About It:** Jesus knew Levi’s longing heart and offered hope by saying 2 words, “Follow me.” If there was a Mrs. Levi, she shared in her husband’s disgrace. When Jesus got a hold of her husband, it would affect her life as well.

Where is Jesus later (v. 15)?

Who is there (v. 15)? See also Luke 5:29.

Who else showed up outside to listen and watch (v. 16)?

What did they see Jesus doing?

What question did they ask about this?

**Scriptural Insight:** Sinners were the really bad people such as money-changers, thieves and prostitutes. They were considered scum like the tax collectors but from a lower class.

What is Jesus’s answer to them (v. 17)? See also Matthew 9:13.
Focus on the Meaning: According to the Pharisees’ teaching, God’s mercy extended only to those who kept the Law (including their laws). But, what is mercy? It is being pardoned and not getting the judgment or punishment we deserve. Forgiveness of sins is mercy. Jesus offered mercy to every tax collector and sinner. Levi said yes to the offer and probably left 10 times more income to follow Jesus than the fishermen did. Levi is known more by his other name Matthew (beloved of God) which speaks of his new identity. He also got a new way to use his writing skills. The Gospel of Matthew is the longest gospel and contains more of Jesus’s sermons than any other. In it, he refers to himself as “Matthew, the tax collector”—what he is now (beloved) and how he was known before Jesus came into his life.

14. Read Luke 3:12-13. Tax collectors were drawn to John the Baptist’s preaching and came to be baptized. What did he tell them?

15. Heartbreak to Hope: The paralyzed man was in need. But, so was healthy, wealthy Levi.

- Do you know someone like that who is smart and seemingly doing well in life but hopeless? Someone who is desperately in need of God’s mercy right now? What about that woman next door or sitting in that office? What can you tell her about your own acceptance of Jesus’s offer of mercy to you that would give them hope?

- Are you the one needing God’s mercy right now? Will you accept Jesus’s offer of mercy and forgiveness so your life can be changed by Jesus like Matthew’s life was changed?

- Perhaps your own “house neighbors” need the Jesus living in you to extend mercy to them, the kind of mercy you’ve already received from Him. Ask Jesus to help you do this.

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
DAY TWO STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 2:18-22.

**Scriptural Insight:** Fasting is a voluntary abstinence from food and/or drink as an expression of religious devotion. In the Old Testament, God prescribed one yearly fast for all Jews on the Day of Atonement as an act of repentance and mourning over sin. By the time of the New Testament, some Jews practiced personal “fasting” (for example, Anna in Luke 2:37). Jesus did not by practice or by teaching stress fasting. The Pharisees promoted voluntary fasts for their disciples twice a week (on Mondays and Thursdays) as an act of piety. The feast in Levi’s house may have occurred on one of those days. Jesus’s parable referred to the Jewish custom exempting the friends of the bridegroom from certain religious obligations such as the weekly fasts. God was doing something new and different. It was the time for celebrating, not mourning, because the long-awaited Kingdom was here. After Pentecost, Jewish Christians continued to fast, but there is no record of Gentile Christians doing so.

16. **Discover the Facts:** This is a curious passage. The Pharisees are continually challenging Jesus’s practices and comparing those to what they consider acceptable.

What oppositional question do they ask (v. 18)?

How does Jesus answer them in vv. 19-20?

What does He say about adding new things to old forms (vv. 21-22)?

**Think About It:** As Christians, we operate under grace and are free to fast or not to fast as we feel led by the Spirit of God to do so. Any time you feel coerced by others to fast, go to the Lord and ask Him, “Is this what you want me to do?” The Lord is pleased with whatever you give Him, as long as it is His idea and His power and not something you do in your own flesh (in your own power without relying on Him). (Sue Bohlin, Probe Ministries)

Read Mark 2:23-28.

17. **Discover the Facts:** Does it seem to you like the Pharisees are stalking Jesus? Here they are again with another oppositional question.

One Sabbath, what was Jesus doing (v. 23)?

What is the question asked by the Pharisees this time (v. 24)?
How does Jesus answer them (vv. 25-26)?

Then, what does He teach about the purpose of the Sabbath (v. 27)?

What claim does He make for Himself (v. 28)?

18. It was according to the Pharisees that Jesus’s actions were unlawful, not according to God. Anyone can feed themselves on the Sabbath. The restriction to working on the Sabbath was for work that led to harvesting a crop to sell. Were Jesus and His disciples doing this?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

**Day Three Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 3:1-6.**

**Historical Insight:** According to Dr. Paul Brand, the late world-renowned leprosy physician, the best example in the Bible of a person with Hansen’s disease is the man with the withered hand in Mark 3:5. He likely suffered from tuberculoid leprosy. (*Answers Magazine*, Vol. 2 No. 3, “Biblical Leprosy: Shedding Light on the Disease that Shuns,” p. 78)

19. **Discover the Facts:** With the question of what is lawful to do on the Sabbath in their minds (2:24), Jesus’s opposition once again closely watched Him to see what He would do in the synagogue.

What is the situation (vv. 1-2)?
What did Jesus say anyway (v. 3)?

What question does Jesus ask to counter their illogical thinking (v. 4)?

Think About It: The Pharisees believed in Jesus’s power to perform miracles. The question was not “Could He?” but “Would He?” Jewish tradition prescribed that aid could be given to the sick on the Sabbath only when the person’s life was threatened, which obviously was not the case here. (*NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition*, note on Mark 3:2, p. 1497)

What did He recognize in them and how did He feel about that (v. 5)?

What happens next (v. 5)?

What is the response of the opposition to Jesus now (v. 6)?

Historical Insight: The Herodians were influential Jews who supported Rome. Normally, the Pharisees would have avoided them in every possible situation. But, their hatred of Jesus is so strong that they plot to kill Him. Now, who is really breaking the Law of Moses? The legalists plotted to break the Law to kill Jesus.

Jesus had a normal human emotional response of anger and distress against the stubborn hearts of the religious people who think they have it “right” and are not teachable. Their hard hearts angered and saddened our Lord. The Jewish people looked up to these religious leaders and were being led away from God, not toward Him, by their influence.

20. Heartbreak to Hope: Do you also feel anger and distress against hard-hearted people in your life? Jesus understands exactly how you feel. He didn’t stop teaching truth to those who were in opposition to Him or whose hearts seemed so uncompassionate towards the hurting. He did the right thing. He can help you do the right thing, also. Just ask for it.
Read Mark 3:7-12.

21. Discover the Facts: More crowds, more teaching, and more demonstrations of God’s power present in Jesus …

What did Jesus do (v. 7)?

What kept Him from getting away with His disciples (vv. 8-9)?

What did He use to help Him stay focused on His priority of teaching the crowd (vv. 10-11; 4:1)?

What interaction did Jesus have with the evil spirits (vv. 11-12)?

22. Heartbreak to Hope: What in today’s lesson speaks to your heart?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

Day Four Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.


23. Discover the Facts: Jesus needed to make a big decision. He would choose some of His many followers (disciples) to be appointed for special service.

What did He do before this moment (Luke 6:12-13)?
Where did Jesus go to call together those He wanted (v. 13)?

How many did He appoint and designate “apostles” (v. 14)?

What would be their three-fold purpose (vv. 14-15)?

24. List those He chose plus what is said about them. Note: when comparing the lists in Matthew 10:2-4 and Luke 6:14-16 with what is here in Mark, some men were known by two names (Bartholomew was also Nathaniel; Thaddeus was also called Judas son of James).

From the Greek: The word translated “apostle” means “delegate, one sent with a special commission.”

25. Why would it be good to have these 12 dedicated Apostles? Consider all the various aspects of being with Jesus.

26. Heartbreak to Hope: Though we are not called to be “Apostles,” we are called by Jesus to be with Him. We are with Him continually because His Spirit lives in us. But, we can be with Him like the Apostles were through what He chose to have His Apostles record for us—now the New Testament writings. When you spend time reading a portion of the New Testament, you are with Jesus so He can teach you and send you out to tell others what you learned from Him. When is your daily designated time to be with Jesus?
27. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Reflect back on this whole lesson, how did someone experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty find hope, healing and love?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

Read “Walking Home with Jesus” on the next page for additional application to this lesson.
Walking Home with Jesus

Where do you live? Picture it in your mind. Do you inhabit a house in a neighborhood or in the country? Do you reside in an apartment? Or, do you occupy a room of someone else’s house? Home is where you live—where you do life together with family and friends. You may spend so much time in an office or in your car that you might feel like you live there.

Now picture the people who live or work around you. Anyone who is not you is your neighbor. Those are all part of your "neighborhood."

In our lesson today, Mark describes what takes place in two homes filled with real people in a real town. Just like that, you and I go home every day to real places surrounded by real people in a real town. The real town for Jesus was Capernaum. Mark wrote,

“A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that He had come home.” (Mark 2:1)

Jesus made this town His home base for ministry to all sides of the Sea of Galilee. He made Himself at home among His new neighbors. And, He does the same thing with us.

I recently rediscovered this verse:

Jesus said, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:23)

Isn’t that delightful? That means walking in the door of wherever we live, Jesus is “with” us. And, what I think Jesus wants us to know today is this: we can experience and enjoy His presence in our homes—daily—and so can our neighbors.

What does it mean to walk home with Jesus? Let’s look at the first real home in Capernaum—Peter’s house, where the paralyzed man was healed.

ENJOYING JESUS’S PRESENCE AT HOME (PETER’S HOUSE)

Scholars and tradition strongly hold that Peter’s house became “the house of Jesus.” Whenever Jesus was in Capernaum, He walked across a small rocky yard through the front door, into the courtyard of a large house and dwelled there with His new “house neighbors.” Who were they?

For sure, Peter and Andrew, plus Peter’s wife—let’s call her Mrs. Peter—and Mrs. Peter’s mother (Mark 1:30). Later in Mark, when the disciples were in the house arguing about something, Jesus takes a little child in His arms. I doubt if He reached out the window and grabbed one off the street! So, I think there were children in Jesus’ new home.

What do you think it was like for Mrs. Peter to experience Jesus’s presence in her home? Of course, there were the fun things...like great conversation around the dinner table! What about how He healed her mom? That’s answered prayer, isn’t it? Especially since she had so many men to feed. Jesus not only ate meals that she prepared, He also befriended her husband and discipled him to be a more mature man. And, ladies, she got to learn from Him herself as He taught in her home. Whenever He was present in her home, she could enjoy Him.
To enjoy Jesus’s presence in your home means to accept it as an absolute fact.

Before we can begin to enjoy Him, we must accept His continual presence as an absolute fact. I don’t mean Jesus lives in the walls or ceilings of your house. You’re not going to find Him hiding in the closet. Nothing spooky like that. This is what I mean: When you and I hear the good news of Christ and put our faith in Him, the Holy Spirit, who’s called the Spirit of Christ, comes to live inside of you and me. We become united with Jesus Christ—one with Him in Spirit. For me, that means He lives in me, and I live in Him. When I am in my house, He’s with me. When I leave my house, He is still with me. What I do, He’s in on it.

That’s true for anyone who trusts in Him. And, get this: we can enjoy Jesus’s presence even when life is not presently enjoyable.

Sometimes life was a bit challenging for Mrs. Peter. For instance, the evening after her mom was healed, every sick person in the whole town was at her front door! How do you think she felt about that? How would you feel? If the townspeople in today’s lesson were crammed into her house to hear Jesus preach, that would mean wall-to-wall sweaty people sitting on her chairs and floor mats. Then, what happens? Crumbled mud starts dropping down all over her floor. She looks up and sees four men tearing this huge hole in her roof to let their friend’s stretcher down near Jesus. What do you think she might have been thinking? Even if it wasn’t Mrs. Peter’s house, it was someone’s house. What would you be thinking?

Some of those sweaty people were likely friends whom she knew and liked—her “street neighbors.” Jesus may have healed some of them outside her front door a while back. They were interested or already believed in Him like the four men and their desperate friend.

But, some of Mrs. Peter’s neighbors were not so nice. Here, Mark introduces us to some critical snobs called Pharisees—a small but influential group of men whose goal for about 150 years was that Israel would stay true to Judaism and never go back to idolatry. So, they emphasized keeping every bit of the law of Moses plus 100s of man-made laws. By Jesus’s day, they had become so self-satisfied with their law-keeping that they were hard-hearted to the things of God and His people. “Teachers of the law” also called “scribes” or “lawyers” were like modern lawyers or seminary professors.

For Mrs. Peter, these lawyers had traveled from all parts of Israel to prominently place themselves in her house, on her chairs and cast their critical remarks. How do you feel about someone who always finds fault with you? Who comes into your home to do the white glove test on your windowsills? All of these were in the presence of Jesus in Mrs. Peter’s home. She needed to accept that reality. And, there’s one more thing…

To enjoy Jesus’s presence in your home means giving Him permission to make it His own.

For Mrs. Peter, it meant all her life. Whenever Jesus was in Capernaum, He and his disciples probably stayed in her house. That meant feeding a bunch more men besides her own. Crowds gathered at the door at mealtime so they could hardly eat before the food got cold. You’ll see this in the next lesson. Later on, a church met in her home. Mrs. Peter needed to remember who made His home in her house. And so do we.

I remember the time when the youth in our church met in someone’s home for mid-week Bible study. They played games outside, took their shoes off as they walked into the front door, and sprawled their sweaty bodies everywhere in Paula’s living room. Paula’s beautiful house reflected her gift for decorating and making things lovely. But, week after week for about four years, forty kids were welcomed there to get to know Jesus. I’m sure something was broken or stained during that time. But, Paula gave permission for Jesus to make her home His own. And, kids got to experience His presence in her home.
Here's what I think Jesus wants us to know: when we go to wherever it is that we live, we walk in that door with Him. He wants us to give Him permission to make it His own.

Likely that won't involve having crowds of people crammed into your place and tearing holes through your roof. But, it might. What do you do then? If you prayed about the place where you are now living, for what did you ask God? Something affordable? Comfortable? Near good schools? We pray; God answers by providing a place. Then what? Do we consider that God has provided not only for our shelter but also for His use?

A picture (at left) has been on our living room wall for about 35 years. It reads: “This is the Lord’s house, temporarily occupied by the Newtons.” Looking at this should remind me that Jesus gave us this place to live but not just for our comfort and enjoyment. It is His home, too. Am I enjoying His presence here? Does He have permission to use it to introduce Himself to His neighbors?

Remember the question I asked at the beginning. Who are your neighbors? The answer is, “Anyone who is not you.” That includes all your “house neighbors”—a husband if you are married, children or grandchildren if you have them, a roommate—as well as your “street neighbors” or “work neighbors” who live next door or work with you. Jesus was at home in Mrs. Peter’s house. She believed in Him, experienced and enjoyed His presence. And while Jesus stayed there, He got to know his new neighbors, including the one who owned the next real home we are visiting—Levi.

**The Neighbors Enjoying Jesus’s Presence (Levi’s House)**

Levi was on a “get rich quick” path of life. A tax collector back then was like a drug dealer today, except his business was legal. The Romans collected a tax on everything including highway tolls and customs on any goods you carried through the city. That’s what Levi was doing—sitting in his tollbooth, collecting that money. To do this job meant that he was educated and could write in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. His job required that he carry an inkwell at his waist and some paper for making notes.

Tax collecting was for the greedy. You could charge whatever you wanted above Rome’s share to line your own pockets. So, if you were a Jewish tax collector you were considered a cheat, a liar, and a traitor—the scum of Jewish society along with the “sinners” (really bad people like moneychangers, thieves, and prostitutes). Tax collectors were so despised that they were not allowed to attend synagogue or to testify in court.

Remember that paralyzed man in Peter’s house? He was desperate. But, so was healthy, wealthy Levi! Do you live near someone like that? Smart, but hopeless. Jesus knew his desperate condition and offered hope by saying two words, “Follow me.” Levi did. So, Jesus walked home with his new neighbor, Levi.

Paul asserts in 1 Corinthians 9:5 that all the Apostles had believing wives so Levi was probably married. Let’s call her Mrs. Levi. Her husband’s disgrace extended to her, also. No synagogue for her. The Jewish community shunned her. Perhaps there is someone in your neighborhood, even in your church, who has experienced this. She’s married to a guy who has a prison record, who struggles with pornography, who is a registered sex offender or an alcoholic. How do you feel about her? How does she feel about herself?
Jesus’s presence brings a life change.

If there was a Mrs. Levi, how do you think she felt when Jesus walked through her front door, arm-in-arm with her husband? We don't know. But, something had changed her husband. And, it would change her life as well.

Look at what Levi did to celebrate his new relationship with Jesus. He threw a big party. Yay! And, look who he invited—guys from the office. Mrs. Levi was probably used to that. They stuck together. And, they brought friends—moneychangers, thieves, and maybe a prostitute or two. Jesus came with His disciples and those who followed Him. Plus, look who else showed up. The Pharisees were listening outside the front door, peering through the windows. Unlike Peter’s house, they would not have stepped foot inside this one!

Wherever Jesus goes, people are always watching, asking questions. Those lawyers saw Him do the unexpected—eating with "sinners." So, they asked, “Why?” Back then, eating with someone was a sign of friendship so how could a preacher be a friend to sinners? You know that before those Pharisees would have eaten one bite of food with Levi, they would’ve demanded Levi wash 7 times in the Jordan River plus completely sanitize his house. Even that wouldn’t be enough! But, that’s not how our Jesus is.

Sure, Mr. and Mrs. Levi didn’t go to church to hear Jesus. They were guilty of sin in their lives just like we are. And, they needed God’s mercy just like we do. Mercy is God’s amnesty. It’s being pardoned and not getting the judgment or punishment we deserve.

Who in your life is desperately in need of God's mercy right now? What about that woman next door or sitting in that office? We are supposed to allow Jesus to use His presence in our lives and homes to reach them. Perhaps your own "house neighbors" need the Jesus living in you to extend mercy to them, the kind of mercy you’ve already received from Him.

Jesus’s presence brings new purpose.

Levi became known by another name—Matthew—meaning, “beloved of God.” That name certainly reflected his new identity. Mrs. Levi was no longer Mrs. Tax Collector but Mrs. Matthew, also beloved of God. And, Matthew had a new way to use his skills. His is the longest gospel and records more of Jesus’s teachings than the other authors do. In his own gospel, Matthew lists himself among the apostles as “Matthew, the tax collector.” That reflects what he was after Jesus came into his life, beloved of God, and how he was known before that time.

And, Matthew’s account of this story records Jesus saying to the Pharisees, “Go and learn what this means. ‘I (God) desire mercy and not sacrifice.’” Mercy is what Levi needed. Mercy is what his wife and friends needed. Jesus offered it to them all—right there in Mrs. Levi’s home.

To Mrs. Peter and Mrs. Levi, Jesus was God with skin on. He isn’t here on earth in His body anymore. But, remember, His Spirit comes to live inside our spirits so that in essence...

Jesus Lives Where I Live; My Neighbors Are His Neighbors.

Homes were significant to Jesus’s ministry on earth. In homes, He taught and had discussions with His disciples. You’ll see this throughout Mark (as in Mark 7:17; 9:33; 10:10). In homes, He ate with those who loved Him as well as with those who were skeptical of Him (Luke 7:36-47, 14:1). In homes, women sat at His feet, listening to Him teach and tearfully pouring out their hearts to Him. Yep. Homes were central to His ministry then and are still important now. Do you think that way?

Did you see the third home in today’s lesson? In Peter's house, what did Jesus tell the healed man to do? Jesus said, “Go…home.” Why not to the synagogue? You know, go brag to the priests and
rabbi? What was at home? The people who loved him and cared for him. Who do you think enjoyed
Jesus’s presence more that day: the Pharisees or the healed man and his family?
Jesus often told people to go home. Later, in Mark 5, he said to another healed man, “Go home to
your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.”
And, the man did that.
Henry Ward Beecher, a 19th century preacher, declared this,

“If you want your neighbor to know what Christ will do for him, let the neighbor see what
Christ has done for you.”

I'll go back to my original question. Where do you live? And, what has Jesus done in your life and
my life that our “house neighbors” and “street neighbors” need to know about?
I recently heard one of my favorite teachers, Josh McDowell, reference Psalm 26:3 which says this
about God:

For your love is ever before me [relationship], and I walk continually in your truth [believing response]. (Psalm 26:3)

Then, he said this:

"Relationships determine what we believe. We are talked into talking; we are loved into
loving; we are related into believing." (Josh McDowell, Dallas Theological Seminary
Commencement, May 2005)

A loving relationship with God incites me to accept His truth. A loving relationship with a child
stimulates that child to accept the truth by which I live. A loving relationship with a neighbor, co-
worker, or family member just might stir that person to accept the truth that drives my life. That’s
why Jesus sent those men and others home. “Go to the ones with whom you have a relationship
and introduce me to them.”

Another one of my favorite teachers from the 20th century, Howard Hendricks, said this:

“You can impress people at a distance; you can only impact them up close. The general
principle is this: the closer the personal relationship, the greater the potential for impact.
”

Impact starts with you enjoying your relationship with Jesus:

- Knowing He is constantly with you, never abandoning you.
- Spending frequent time with Him in Bible reading and prayer. Did you know that as you are
doing your Bible study, you can be talking to Jesus about it the whole time? He’s enjoying
it with you.
- Talking to Him about the big and small stuff in your life.
- Doing life together with Him all day long.

Have you been enjoying His presence like that? You can. I can. Then, we’ll have something to offer
to our neighbors—“house neighbors,” “street neighbors,” and “work neighbors.”
NOW WHAT?

We have just started this study of Mark. Maybe you are curious but not yet convinced about Jesus. Is the Holy Spirit drawing you today to commit yourself to Him? If the prayer of your heart is for Jesus to have mercy on you, a sinner, at this moment Jesus is saying to you, “Follow Me.” Say yes. And, when you go home today, you’ll be walking home with Jesus. Please don’t leave this lesson without knowing for sure.

If you are already a Christian, what are you going to do with this message? You can enjoy Jesus’s presence in your life and home. Then, think, feel, and act like Jesus when it comes to interacting with your neighbors.

To think like Jesus

Jesus was selective in how He spent His relationship time. Even He couldn’t spend time with everybody. So, define your “neighborhood” accordingly. If you can only have time for the two people on either side of you, that’s okay. Two is more than none. Submit your “neighborhood” to the Lord, and say, “Lord, you live where I live. I know these are your neighbors, too. Please make me willing to be available for you to use me to introduce them to you.”

To feel like Jesus

Feeling like Jesus starts with longing for those who live near you to experience and enjoy His presence as you do.

• You can pray, “Lord Jesus, please give me your heart for them.”
• You can ask God to draw them to Himself (John 6:44) and for His Spirit to convince them of their sin and need for Jesus (John 16:8-10).
• You can also pray for her closest friend to get saved and then share the gospel with her.
• You can ask Jesus to help you know their needs and how they are thinking.
• You can extend mercy to the Mrs. Levi in your life.

To act like Jesus

What would it look like to act like Jesus?

1. Plan ways to interact with them. I don’t think Jesus accidentally walked by Levi’s tollbooth, do you? In America, we have a big obstacle—privacy. We go in the house and shut the door. We have privacy fences and closed garages. We have back decks and pools to spend our time. Who’s looking out the front as neighbors go by our houses?

2. Pay attention to the emotions and needs expressed in your conversations with them. God can use your natural nosiness in a constructive way!

3. Pursue opportunities to build relationships with the one who seems interested in spiritual things. Like the 4 friends who banded together to bring their needy friend to Jesus, surround your friend with other Christians—contractors, insurance agents, and doctors. Research says a typical unchurched person must get to know at least 5 believers relationally before she will cross the line and trust the message of Christianity.

REFLECT AND RESPOND
Lesson 4: Blasphemy, Parables, and a Stormy Night
(Mark 3:20-4:41)

Day One Study
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.


1. Discover the Facts: This section is written in “sandwich” form. Verses 20-21 and verses 31-35 are like two slices of bread with verses 22-30 as the filling between them. It was a common format for writing at the time called a “chiasm.” Mark used this format 5 times in his book. Appropriately, this incident took place at mealtime.

When Jesus enters a house, what did he experience (v. 20)?

Who heard about this and what did they decide to do (v. 21)?

Think About It: Jesus experienced family pressure for Him to rest and stop the craziness. Their intentions were good in that they cared about Him. But, they misread the work He was doing. Has this ever happened to you?

While His family members were on their way, what did the lawyers declare (v. 22)?

In vv. 23-26, how does Jesus show that their charge is illogical?

In v. 27, who is stronger than the “strong man?”

What does Jesus declare can be forgiven (v. 28)?
Focus on the Meaning: “I tell you the truth” is a statement that says to the listener, “Pay attention. This is very important.” It’s almost like an oath. Mark records Jesus using this phrase 13 times. It denotes that Jesus was speaking out of His own authority.

What does Jesus declare will not be forgiven (v. 29)?

Why did Jesus say this (v. 30)?

Review v. 21. Who arrives (v. 31)?

What happened next (v. 32)?

What did Jesus say that probably shocked the people (vv. 33-34)?

What is the dividing line (v. 35)?

Jesus hits back hard at the hard-hearted teachers of the law. This discussion of blasphemy has often been misunderstood and wrongly taught. Blasphemy means to slander God or give credit to something else that belongs to Him.

2. Let’s look first at the truth of what Jesus said in the context in which He said it. We learn from Matthew that Jesus had just healed a demon-possessed man. What is the real accusation against Jesus by those who are opposing Him (v. 22, 30)?

3. Then, let’s define blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Read John 16:8-9 and the definition below to answer the next question.

Focus on the Meaning: Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is this: “The malicious resistance against the Holy Spirit’s converting power after one is shown that Jesus is the Christ.” It is like a line in the sand. John 16:8-9 describes the Holy Spirit’s role in conversion and the willful unbelief of those who resist Him.
In what ways are the lawyers committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit? Derive your answer from the verses in Matthew and Mark that you read today.

**Think About It:** They know the truth and are still choosing against God and are slandering God in the process! He’s doing the miracles. Demons don’t heal people; God does. Who has been getting all the praise for the healings as they happened so far? God has. Aren’t they even listening?

4. **Heartbreak to Hope:** This reference to “family” is a foretaste of the Church. Every believer is adopted into God’s family by faith in Jesus. Doing God’s will by responding to Jesus makes you “family.” Your personal response to Jesus is not dependent on your birth and rearing. The underlying question Jesus is asking the crowd is this, “Will you follow Me more than the influence of your immediate family?” How will you answer that question?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
DAY TWO STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 4:1-20.

Why did Jesus teach with parables? Parables are sermon illustrations usually taken from everyday life or common experiences. They generally teach one main point so not every detail has significance. Those on the outside of Jesus’s circle of followers got the parables, which formed a dividing line between those who were in opposition or just curious and those who were committed to Jesus. Even the unreceptive could remember the parable. If their hearts responded, they could understand its meaning. His followers got the more direct teaching.

5. **Discover the Facts**: This is a well-known parable. Look at it with fresh eyes by answering these questions:

   Describe the setting (v. 1).

   Where did the farmer scatter his seed (vv. 3-8)?

   What happened to the seed in each type of soil?

   What did Jesus say in v. 9?

   What did the Twelve ask Him (v. 10)?

   Jesus says the listeners have two choices in vv. 11-12. What are they?

   **Focus on the Meaning**: A secret or mystery (vv. 10, 12) in the Bible is something previously unknown but now being revealed. See Deuteronomy 29:29. A lot of things are revealed in the New Testament that were not known or understood in the Old Testament. Jesus drew a distinction between those who accepted His teaching, such as the Twelve, and those who rejected it, such as the [lawyers] and Pharisees. God was giving those who welcomed Jesus’s teaching new revelation about the coming messianic kingdom. He was withholding that revelation from those who rejected Him. *(Dr. Constable’s Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, p. 69)*

   What does the seed represent (v. 14)?
What does the hard path represent (v. 15)?

What do the rocky places represent (vv. 16-17)?

What do the thorny places represent (vv. 18-19)?

What does the good soil represent (v. 20)?

**Focus on the Meaning:** Most commentaries present this “Parable of the Sower” as being about fruitfulness and teachability in response to God. The main point is this: How will you respond to the Word of God sown in you? Truth must be acted upon. Fruitfulness is the result.

6. What are ears to hear (v. 9)? Did the disciples have ears to hear? How do you know?

7. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Where does the soil of your heart fit in this parable? Are you teachable? Are you acting upon the truth you are taught? What evidence of fruitfulness of the Word of God is there in your life? Acting upon the truth of God’s Word will bring you hope in those places where you might be experiencing heartbreak or pain.

**Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.**
DAY THREE STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 4:21-34.

Instead of looking at these parables in detail, you will be discerning what you think is the main idea that Jesus was illustrating with each parable and why you decided that.

   • The main idea of this parable is what?
   • Why did you choose that?

   • The main idea of this parable is what?
   • Why did you choose that?

10. Vv. 30-32.
    • The main idea of this parable is what?
    • Why did you choose that?

11. Focusing on vv. 33-34:
    • What did Jesus give to His audience?
    • What did He do for His disciples (the Twelve)? See also v. 11.
Think About It: If you are a parent or teacher, you can identify with Jesus in discipling children. In a sense, Jesus was discipling His “children” (v. 34) in a way that is very similar to a parent or teacher discipling her children or students.

12. Heartbreak to Hope: Jesus mentioned a lamp in v. 21. Lamps give out light. Believers bear the light of the truth about Jesus. We are the walking, talking, visible representatives of the invisible God. As you let His light shine through you, who gets to see and enjoy the light?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

DAY FOUR STUDY
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 4:35-41.

Historical Insight: Situated in a basin surrounded by mountains, the Sea of Galilee is particularly susceptible to sudden, violent storms. Cool air from the Mediterranean is drawn down through the narrow mountain passes and clashes with the hot, humid air lying over the lake. (NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition, note on Mark 4:37, p. 1501)

13. Discover the Facts: Have you been in a terrifying rainstorm while in a boat or driving? You will certainly be able to identify with the disciples.
After teaching all day, what does Jesus say (v. 35)?

Who is with Him (v. 36)?

What happened (v. 37)?

Where is Jesus and why (v. 38)?
Think About It: When you are so tired you can’t even stand up straight, Jesus has been there. He understands exhaustion. You can trust Him to help you and love you through it.

What do the disciples do and say (v. 38)?

What did Jesus say to the storm (v. 39)? Note: it’s the same thing that He said in Mark 1:25.

What two questions did He ask of His disciples (v. 40)?

What is their response (v. 41)?

Think About It: Jesus wasn’t worried about Himself or the disciples. God wasn’t worried about His Son. He was letting them all go through the storm, letting them struggle. The disciples were worried, though. Did they pray? Or, did they just panic? Their question was basically, "Do you care about us?” How often have you asked that same question when you have to struggle through something that is painful, uncomfortable, or fearful?

14. What new appreciation did the disciples have for their “rabbi?”

The question Jesus asked the disciples was directed at their fear. The word He used in v. 40 means “cringing in fear, panic, timid.” It never is used positively.

Fear is a normal human emotion designed by God to alert us to danger so we will take action against it. Yet fear can take root in us and cause us to give way to panic and hysteria. Jesus knows this about us. When we are afraid, Jesus wants us to trust Him and not give way to fear. Learning to do so is our walk from fear to faith.

Whenever you are gripped by fear, here are four truths you can apply to any situation. Say these truths to yourself over and over to cement them in your mind:

- God loves me.
- God knows what is going on in my life.
- God can do something about it.
- I can trust God’s goodness in what He chooses to do.
That last truth is the hard part. God is good and what He does is always good (Psalm 119:68). During our time of trusting Him, a loving God will say “no” to some things and “yes” to others. Our choice is to trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do.

At the end of this lesson, find the “Applying Faith to Fear” process. Snap a picture of it and refer to it whenever you are afraid.

15. **Heartbreak to Hope:** What are the main things that strike fear in your heart? Do you have any specific phobias? Pick one thing that is causing you fear today. Apply the four truths above to that situation. Spend about 5 minutes trusting Jesus with that specific fear in your heart. Just mentally hand it to Him. Then, write it on a card and ask someone in your group (or a trusted friend) to pray for you all week long. Find “Whom Shall I Fear?” by Chris Tomlin on YouTube.com and sing along.

16. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Reflect back on this whole lesson, how did someone experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty find hope, healing and love?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
Applying Faith To Fear

The information below is a great tool to use whenever you are afraid. It will lead you to apply faith to your fear.

1. **Confront** it. What fears do you have right now? Think about them. The worst ones, the real ones, and the imaginary ones.

2. **Ask** about each one: What is my worst-case scenario? Consider just one of those fears. What is the worst that could happen? Think realistically.

3. **Consider**: If the worst I can imagine happens, could I handle it through the presence and power of Jesus Christ? As a believer, you have the power of the One who created the Universe living inside of you. Can He help you get through anything? Read Romans 8:26—the Spirit Himself is praying for you in your weakness when you don’t even know what to ask for.

4. **Remember** these four truths and speak them to yourself:
   - God loves me. *John 16:27; Romans 5:5, Ephesians 5:1*
   - God knows what is going on in my life. *Matthew 6:31-32; Psalm 139:1-10*
   - God can do something about it. *Genesis 18:14; Luke 1:37; Mark 10:27*
   - I can trust His goodness in whatever He chooses to do. *Psalm 119:68; Proverbs 3:5*

5. **Pray**: Prayer is simply talking to God about anything and everything.
   - Thank the Lord for His presence and His goodness.
   - Ask Him for the courage and peace to ride out the storm. Where the Bible is clear, you can claim God’s promises by faith.
   - Anytime, you can ask for deliverance and protection. But you cannot hold God to promises He hasn’t made, such as immunity from natural calamities, illness, and troubles.

6. **Live life** securely in Him:
   - Take common sense precautions. Be wise in the world.
   - Trust God to show you what to do and to give you strength when you are weak.
Lesson 5: Desperation, Deliverance, and Deli on Command
(Mark 5:1-6:56)

Day One Study
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 5:1-20.

Historical Insight: Mark and Luke called this area "the country of the Gerasenes," but Matthew called it the country of the Gadarenes. This incident apparently happened somewhere on the southeast coast of the [Sea of Galilee]. About a mile south of Gersa, there is a fairly steep slope within forty yards from the shore. And about two miles from there, cavern tombs are found which appear to have been used for dwellings. (Dr. Constable's Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, pp. 79-80)

1. Discover the Facts: Jesus headed over to Gentile territory and encountered someone who desperately needed Him.

   Where is Jesus now (v. 1)?
   
   What happened there (v. 2)?
   
   What do we know about the man (vv. 3-5)?
   
   What did the man do when he saw Jesus (v. 6)?
   
   What did he say?
   
   What had Jesus said to cause such a reaction (v. 8)?
   
   What question did Jesus ask?
   
   What did the demons beg Jesus not to do (v. 10)?
What did the demons ask Jesus to do instead (vv. 11-12)?

What happened next (v. 13)?

When the people heard the news and came to see what happened, what did they see (v. 15)?

How did the people respond to this “miracle” (vv. 15-17)?

What was the healed man’s response (v. 18)?

What did Jesus tell him to do (v. 19)?

What did the healed man do (v. 20)?

**Focus on the Meaning:** Evidently the demons requested permission to enter the swine so they could destroy them. Jesus’ permission resulted in everyone seeing the great destructive power and number of the demons, and that the man had experienced an amazing deliverance. Only Mark recorded the number of swine (“about 2,000”). As usual, Mark drew attention to Jesus’ awesome power. *(Dr. Constable’s Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, p. 81)*

2. Notice the slander the demons made against Jesus in verse 7. Demons are deceivers. Who was really torturing whom in this story?

**Focus on the Meaning:** When the demons said that they were called “legion, for we are many,” they were declaring they represented the many powers opposed to Jesus who were in rebellion against God. … This story emphasizes the man’s pathetic condition as well as the purpose of demonic possession—to torment and destroy the divine likeness with which man was created. *(NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition, note on Mark 5:5, p. 1501)*
3. What is missing in the townspeople’s response to the healing of the miserable demon-possessed man?

4. What motivated their response?

**Think About It:** Fear trumps opportunity in this incident in Jesus’s ministry. Because of their fear of the unexplainable and their loss of income, the townspeople didn’t care that the once miserable man was now completely normal. Nor did they bring their sick to be healed by the one who heals.

5. For what purpose did Jesus tell the man to go home?

6. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Read the quotes below. Reflect and respond on the statements that follow.

   “You can impress people at a distance; you can only impact them up close.” (Howard Hendricks)

   “Relationships determine what we believe. We are talked into talking; we are loved into loving; we are related into believing.” (Josh McDowell)

   Relationships determine response. A loving relationship with a co-worker, neighbor, or family member just might stir that person to listen to your story and to accept the truth by which you live. That’s why Jesus sent so many people home after their lives were changed. “Go to the ones with whom you have a relationship and introduce me to them.” How has this truth impacted your life?
Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

**Day Two Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 5:21-43.**

What was the status of women in Jesus’s day? In Greek/Roman society, women were generally given second-class status with few legal rights. In Jewish society, women had it better as they held a place of honor as wife and mother, especially if they had sons. At the birth of a son, all celebrated. At the birth of a daughter, there wasn’t as much celebration. Jesus introduced a radically different value system. His compassion for women elevated their position in society and gave them equal relationship with Him. He spoke to women publicly, taught them openly, and defended them when they were criticized. He let them travel with Him and support Him with their own money. He never spoke condescendingly to women, made derogatory jokes about women, or humiliated them. No wonder they loved Him!

7. **Discover the Facts:** This is another “sandwich” section (vv. 21-24, vv. 25-34, and vv. 35-43).

   Who came to Jesus (v. 22)?

   What is his need?

   **Historical Insight:** A synagogue ruler is similar to an executive pastor in today's church settings. Jairus had a problem that neither his prominence nor his wealth could solve.

   What happened next (v. 24)?

   What is told about the woman who came to Jesus (vv. 25-26)?

   Who or what brought her to Jesus (vv. 27-28)?

   What happened when she reached out to Jesus (v. 29)?
What did Jesus say and do (vv. 30-32)?

How did the woman respond (v. 33)?

What did Jesus say to her (v. 34)?

Who is waiting during this interruption?

What has happened (v. 35)?

What does Jesus tell Jairus (v. 36)?

What is happening when Jesus gets to the house with Peter, James, and John (vv. 38-39)?

After putting the mourners out, what did Jesus do and say (vv. 40-41)?

Then, what happened (vv. 42-43)?

**Scriptural Insight:** Jesus awakened the little girl from the sleep of death. She was not resurrected with an immortal body. She would die again at some point in history. Jesus is the only one who has been resurrected from the dead.

8. Considering what you as a woman enjoy in life,
   - What did the sick woman probably not get to do or enjoy in her life?
   - In what ways could she now live in peace and be free from her suffering?
   - Jesus calls her “daughter.” How is this an application of Mark 3:35?
Think About It: When Jesus insisted that she publicly reveal herself, He gave her hope for a new life. She could enter society and receive spiritual life. According to Ephesians 3:20, our God always does more than we ask or think!

9. What does Jesus tell Jairus (v. 36)? Read Luke 8:50. What message was He giving to Jairus?

“Waiting” is prominent in this passage. The woman with the bleeding had to wait 12 years for relief and healing. Jairus had to wait an agonizingly long time through delays, diversions, and disappointing news. Jesus could have healed the girl from a distance, but He didn’t. He stretched Jairus’s faith through the waiting. God uses waiting to teach us to trust Him.

Scriptural Insight: In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word translated “wait” (upon the Lord) means “to bind together” as in tying together loose ends. Waiting is rarely pleasant to us, but we make ourselves do it daily in various situations (doctor’s offices, traffic, checkout lanes). Our focus is usually not on the waiting itself, but on the end result of the waiting. When it comes to waiting on the Lord, the Bible communicates a clear message: we are to do it, and it’s good for us. Psalm 27:14 tells us waiting on the Lord will “strengthen your heart.” Waiting on God brings us strength in all areas in our lives. It teaches us about Him and His timing. During those times of waiting, our ear is more attuned to the work of God. We also make ourselves available to talk with Him in prayer. When we seek God for a solution in our lives, these times of waiting strengthen our relationship with Him as we learn to rely on His timing and trust in His goodness. It binds us together with Him. (Lisa Jenkins-Moore, “Entwined in Him,” Living Magazine, November 2016, pp. 16-17)

10. Heartbreak to Hope: We must usually wait for God’s “always perfect” timing in answer to our prayers. Is this a problem for you? Have you become discouraged (or been discouraged in the past) from having to wait? Read the words to the song below. Consider that God is in the waiting, too, and that waiting binds you together with Him? How does this change your perspective of waiting?

“You are in the waiting in that moment of my life, when my faith and hope collide. My heart’s anticipating just how and when You’ll move. Oh, that’s when You prove You are in the waiting, too” (“In the Waiting” by Shannon Wexelberg)

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
LESSON 5

DAY THREE STUDY
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.
Read Mark 6:1-6 (first part).
11. **Discover the Facts**: We are given more information about Jesus’s hometown and His family.

    Where is He (vv. 1-2)?

    From their questions, what did the listeners notice about Him (v. 2)?

    What do you find out about Jesus’s earlier life and family (v. 3)?

    What response did the crowd have to Him (v. 3)?

    What did Jesus say to the crowd (v. 4)?

    What could He not do and why (vv. 5-6)?

**Think About It**: Jesus was a carpenter, a skilled craftsman, until He was 30 years old. In today’s terms, he would be considered a blue-collar worker. He was a nobody in His hometown. If you do manual labor or are a craftsman, Jesus knows what your work is like. He understands it.

12. **Heartbreak to Hope**: Have you experienced rejection from your family or hometown similar to what Jesus experienced? He understands how you feel. Ask Him to show you how to respond to them next time you are disrespected or slandered by those who should appreciate you.
Scriptural Insight: Who were Jesus’s brothers? Some church traditions hold that Mary had only one child, Jesus, and stayed a virgin for the rest of her life. Therefore, other siblings mentioned were either cousins or step-siblings (children of Joseph from a previous marriage) rather than half-siblings (children of Joseph and Mary together). Let’s look at what the Bible actually says about this.

- Mark 6:3 (Mt 13:55)—this verse states plainly that Jesus had 4 brothers and at least 2 sisters. Interestingly, the townspeople who knew the family, calls them Jesus’s brothers and sisters. The Greek word for brother refers to an actual biological brother, having a common mother and/or father. They had to have shared one biological parent for this word to apply. Since Joseph was not Jesus’s biological father, the common biological parent had to be Mary. Any attempt to make them cousins certainly violates a literal interpretation of the scripture, as does trying to make them step-siblings.

- Galatians 1:9—James is called the Lord’s (Jesus’s) brother, the same Greek word referenced above.

- John 7:5—the writer of this gospel, John (Jesus's cousin), calls them “His (Jesus's) own brothers” who did not believe in Him. John would know whether they were brothers or cousins. Again, the Greek for brother refers to a biological sibling. The interaction between Jesus and His brothers in this passage gives the impression that Jesus is the older, not the baby of the family.

- Acts 1:14—those present in the nucleus of the early church were Jesus’s brothers.

- Matthew 1:25—Joseph kept Mary a virgin until Jesus’s birth, a meaningless word unless it refers to Joseph and Mary beginning normal marital sexual relations after the birth. There is no scriptural evidence that Mary remained a virgin throughout her marriage.

- Luke 2:7—Jesus is called Mary’s firstborn, implying that she had other children later. **But, the most significant logical argument** is that Joseph was legally eligible for David’s throne. It was then through Joseph that Jesus was legally eligible for the throne. If Joseph had 4 sons older than Jesus, then the eldest of those sons (presumably James) would hold the legal title to the throne of David. This does not leave an option for Jesus to be the Messiah! (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, pages 126-127, 208, 815; NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition notes; Dr. Constable’s Notes on Matthew and Mark)


13. Discover the Facts: Jesus was on another tour of teaching from village to village. The disciples have been trained. Now, they are sent out to practice what they’ve learned.

How were the Twelve sent out (v. 7)?

How were they to travel (vv. 8-9)?

Where were they to stay (vv. 10-11)?

If they received opposition, what were they to do (v. 11)?
**Historical Insight:** “Shaking the dust off their feet” was a symbolic act practiced by the Pharisees when they left an “unclean” Gentile area. Here it represented an act of warning to those who rejected God’s message. *(NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition, note on Matthew 10:14, p. 1456)*

What did the Twelve do (vv. 12-13)?

**Scriptural Insight:** The people knew the difference between those who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. The gospel writers distinguished the differences for us as they wrote individual accounts. Yet, we are not told how they generally knew who was controlled by evil spirits rather than being infected with an illness.

14. As disciples of the rabbi Jesus, what did they do that mirrored what Jesus did?

**Think About It:** Preparation (being with Him, watching Him teach and work) added to delegation (doing it themselves with His authority to do so) produces disciple-makers.

15. Jesus instructed them not to take food, money or extra clothes. What would the disciples need to learn about God on their journey?

**Scriptural Insight:** Another time (Luke 22:35-36), Jesus tells them to take extra supplies. It is important that you do not take Jesus’s instructions here as standard procedure for all ministry travels.

16. **Heartbreak to Hope:** In what areas of your life do you recognize God teaching you to trust Him for provision or protection?
Read Mark 6:14-29.
17. Who did the various groups of people think that Jesus was (vv. 14-16)?

18. What grabbed your attention from the account of John’s death (vv. 17-29)?

Think About It: Verse 20 is another example of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Herod was intrigued enough to listen to John and knew him to be a righteous and holy man. Yet, he remained unconvinced and unrepentant as was also his manipulative wife Herodias.

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
**Day Four Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 6:30-46.**

19. *Discover the Facts*: The disciples return from their mission trip (vv. 7-13).

   What did the Twelve report (v. 30)?

   What did Jesus want for them (v. 31)?

   After they went by boat to a solitary place, what happened (v. 33)?

   How did Jesus feel when He landed and saw the crowd (v. 34)?

   What did He do for them first (v. 34)?

   What happened later in the day (vv. 35-36)?

   How did Jesus challenge them (vv. 37-38)?

   What did Jesus direct the people to do (vv. 39-40)?

   Then, what did He do (v. 41)?

   What happened next (vv. 42-43)?

   At the least, how many people were fed (v. 44)?

   What did Jesus do afterwards (vv. 45-46)?
Think About It: Jesus gave them the opportunity to learn how to serve people by challenging them to figure out how to find food for the people. And, like a great coach, He talked them through it.

20. They all ate and were satisfied.
   - What does it mean to be satisfied?

   - Read John 6:36. What does Jesus say about Himself?

   - Jesus looked upon the crowd as sheep needing a shepherd. Read Psalm 23:1-3. What does a good shepherd do for his sheep?

21. Who did the multiplying of the bread and fish? Can God multiply your resources when you give thanks for what you have and offer it to Him?

22. Read John 6:14-15. What did the crowd want to do? In light of this, why do you think Jesus sent His disciples away?

23. Heartbreak to Hope: Have you wanted to get away from the pressure for a while, either for yourself or with your family? Retreating to a quiet place and getting some rest is biblical. Take the time to get away with the Lord this week to get refreshed.
Read Mark 6:47-56.

24. Discover the Facts: Let’s look at the details in this familiar story.

By evening, where is everyone (v. 47)?

What did Jesus see (v. 48)?

When did He go out to them and how?

What was His intention?

How did the disciples react to seeing Jesus walking on water (vv. 49-50 first part)?

What did Jesus say to them?

When Jesus climbed into the boat, what happened (v. 51)?

Why were they amazed (v. 52)?

When they landed at Gennesaret, what happened (vv. 53-56)?

Focus on the Meaning: The Twelve were still having trouble seeing Jesus as God. They were still thinking of Him as a rabbi or a prophet like Elijah or Elisha. Their lifelong concept of the Messiah was that of a warrior king like David had been. Jesus didn’t fit that image.

25. Notice that Jesus’s intention was to pass them by as they struggled (v. 48). What do you learn from this?
26. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Read Psalm 103:2-5. Our God promises to satisfy your heart’s desires with good things, to fill you with everything you need to feel satisfied. As you reflect on Psalm 103:2-5, where in your life might you need Jesus to “satisfy your desires with good things?”

27. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Reflect back on this whole lesson, how did someone experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty find hope, healing and love?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

Read "Jesus, A Personal God" at the end of this lesson for additional insight and application.
Jesus, A Personal God

Get the picture. A huge crowd of people welcomes Jesus. They were expecting Him. They are pressing around Him, crushing Him so that He could hardly move or breathe because of the jam. Driven from the Decapolis (Mark 5:17), He is welcomed in Galilee. They can hardly wait to see what He would do next.

Suddenly a man pushes his way through the crowd, falls at Jesus’s feet and pleads earnestly with Him to come and lay hands on his daughter. The synagogue ruler was a layman responsible for maintaining order, conducting services, and cleaning the building, much like deacons or executive pastors do today. He was prominent and wealthy. But he had a problem that neither his prominence nor his wealth could solve. Luke tells us that his daughter was 12, an only child, and was dying.

Jairus obviously loves his daughter even though sons were considered more valuable, and he is very specific in what He wants Jesus to do. “Come and touch her.” The Jews believed that the touch transmitted vitality. Jairus had faith in Jesus’s touch, and he expressed that faith. Jesus acts upon the faith we have, which is wonderful and encouraging to us.

But, would Jesus take time out to go to Jairus’s house for a little girl? Was a little girl of any value in His eyes? Yes. Jesus goes with him. To Him, this little girl is just as important as anyone else. He starts off with the crowd following Him.

In this crowd is a woman who also has a desperate need. Her life is a living death, and her condition is hopeless. Her bleeding is probably uterine hemorrhaging like a number of women experience with fibroids, menopause, or cancer. She has suffered for 12 years with no break. She is probably pale, emaciated, and weakened. She must have been a woman of some means—at least she possessed enough financial resources to continue to seek out one doctor after another.

Jewish literature has a whole section of remedies for this malady, which apparently didn’t work. One was to carry ashes of ostrich eggs on her body. She may also have been given ground-up willow bark to reduce her pain. This was a bitter tasting remedy containing salicin, an aspirin-like drug that would have only aggravated her bleeding. All her money was gone, and she was worse. Her one chance came now with Jesus.

Yet even worse than her physical condition is the social and religious ostracism she was certain to have faced. The prevailing opinions of her day were not unlike our own: Bad things don’t happen to good people. You get what you justly deserve. Thus, to be stricken with a chronic, incurable disease such as this was tantamount to a confession of sinful behavior, presumably being immoral.

According to Mosaic Law, anyone with a bodily discharge is ceremonially unclean. She cannot enter the synagogue or the Temple. People shun her generally, since anyone having physical contact with her is made ceremonially unclean until after they bathe and wait a specific period of time. She can touch no one, and no one can touch her.

Think how this would have affected:
- Her social life—not be invited to parties, weddings, anything.
- Her worship life—she couldn’t even sit in the women’s section of the synagogue.
- Her marital life—her husband would be unclean for 7 days after every sexual encounter with her; perhaps she had been divorced and shut off from her family.

She is an outcast: lonely, isolated, and probably in a state of clinical depression.
This desperate woman hears about Jesus. It’s our job to tell. How can they hear without a preacher or proclaimer? Who knows how many times it takes? She heard He was healing all kinds of incurable diseases. Hope flickers in her heart. Just going into the surging crowd would have brought their hostility on her if they knew.

She comes to Jesus on her own. Sadly, no friend has brought her to Jesus. She acts on her own faith—mixed with some superstition about His garments. She doesn’t know if Jesus would respond to her. She thinks to herself, “If I just touch His clothes.” She wouldn’t ask Him to touch her. She reaches out and touches His cloak, probably one of the four tassels on His outer garment. She took the initiative for her own healing and is the only woman in the Bible to do this. Others inadvertently touched Him; she deliberately did.

Immediately, her bleeding stops. Power surges through her body. She feels it. She knows she is completely healed. It is a vivid moment of joy for her!

At once, Jesus turns and asks, “Who touched me?” Did Jesus already know who touched Him? Commentaries will disagree on this. Most say God healed her through the power active in Jesus. So, when He felt the power go out of Him, He turned to ask. I believe He knew what happened because He was always God. He laid aside His glory and did not use His attributes for Himself while on earth. But He knew what happened. He always knew what those around Him were thinking before they spoke.

It is a dramatic moment for Jesus and for the timid woman. Later, it was a common practice for the crowds to touch the hem of His garments and be healed. Here Jesus chooses to single out this case for examination. There is no magic in the garments of Jesus. Even if there is superstition in the woman’s mind, Jesus honors her faith.

Jesus isn’t asking for His sake, but for her sake. He wants her to have a personal relationship with Him. Jesus will not allow the woman to recede into the crowd without publicly commending her faith, giving her assurance that she is permanently healed. He thus declares publicly that she is now clean, and lets her know that He accepts her. It is also likely that He wants her to know that He freely gave to her rather than her thinking she was taking something secretively.

Although a far more impressive male leader had asked Jesus to come to his home to heal his daughter, Jesus stopped the whole procession to talk to this poor, outcast woman as though she were the only one there. God’s love shows no partiality. We are more than just a face in the crowd.

Jesus wants us to know that, too. You may know someone who is involved in a bad relationship with a man who does not encourage her, support and respect her, or appreciate her worth. He may be too busy bossing her around. You need to let her know that Jesus considers her valuable.

Jesus will not allow the woman to recede into the crowd without publicly speaking to her and commending her faith. He keeps looking, penetratingly. The disciples are unconcerned and give a nervy answer about the crowd. Jairus is probably getting very anxious and impatient about this woman. But, Jesus insists. When she sees He’s not going to let her go unnoticed, she tells Him the whole truth.

Some of us feel that God isn’t noticing our pain. We pray, nothing happens. We are not unnoticed. He is sovereign, and He knows. He chooses the instrument He uses to make us more like the Lord Jesus Christ. And suffering is an important instrument in His hands much as we hate it. A goldsmith keeps the metal in the fire until his reflection is seen in its surface. God keeps us in the fire of suffering until He sees the character of His Son reflected in our lives.

The trembling woman falls at His feet. What a vivid picture of the feeling of this sensitive woman who now had to speak. Everyone hears her tell why she touched Him and how she had been instantly healed. She gives her simple testimony. Others now hear.
Jesus calls her, “Daughter,” the only time recorded when He addresses a woman by this name. It’s a tender expression. She has a new relationship with God and a new relationship with Jesus. Remember whom He said were in His family? Those who do God’s will. Those who believe in Him. All through the Gospels, Jesus honored an individual’s faith in Him or rebuked a lack of faith. Jesus took the time to point out to both the men and women in the crowd that this woman’s faith was the reason for her healing.

The New Testament word for “healed” actually means “saved” as well. Here both physical healing (freed from suffering) and spiritual salvation (peace) are meant. The two are often seen together in Mark’s gospel. Romans 5:1 says we have peace with God through faith in His son. Peace speaks of wholeness in our relationship with God when we trust Christ. She just wanted healing. Now she could enter society because she is healed. And, she receives spiritual life as well. God always does more than we ask or think. Because He sees the woman’s needs, He does not pass her by. He seems acutely aware of the woman’s pain, and so He reaches out to help.

**JESUS HAS THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE WHAT HE BRINGS INTO OUR LIVES.**

In the meantime, Jairus’s faith is stretched. His little girl dies. This woman has delayed them. What is Jairus thinking by now? Jesus tells Jairus, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” In the Greek, this really means, “Stop being afraid and keep on believing” (a continuous action). You can’t do both at the same time since being afraid and believing are mutually exclusive. The Psalmist said, “I will trust and not be afraid” (Psalm 56:3).

This is important for us as well. When fear overwhelms us, we can with an act of our will stop being afraid and choose to believe God that He is in control and will not abandon us. Fear is an emotion; faith is an act of the will.

Jesus promises Jairus that his daughter will be healed. It takes more faith to believe that He can bring someone back from the dead than to just heal from a deadly disease. Jesus wants to stretch Jairus’s faith. We always have solutions we pray to the Lord. But we have to face life realistically saying to Him, “I am your daughter, Lord. Help me to deal with this situation.” Remember that God is good all the time. You can trust His goodness in what He chooses to do in your life.

Jesus tenderly takes the little girl by the hand, touches her (this makes a Jew unclean, but nothing can make Jesus unclean), and speaks to her in tender terms, “Little girl, get up.” Her spirit returns. The touch of Christ’s hand and the power of His voice restore her to life. She stands up with instantaneous recovery. Her parents are “out of their minds” with excitement and joy. He tells them to feed her. He has done His part. He turns her over to her parents to do theirs.

**JESUS CARES FOR WOMEN.**

Jesus stopped His public ministry to heal two women—one publicly; the other privately. One was socially dead; the other physically dead. One touched Him and was healed without a word; the other He touched and spoke to when she was healed. One was an outcast; the other was loved within her family circle. Both were unclean. Both were healed instantly and completely, receiving new life. Both were beyond human help and without hope.

Jesus demonstrated the value He places on every person—radically different from His day. He healed a man of horrible demonic possession whom everyone else had shunned (Mark 5:1-20). He took time out from His busy schedule to minister to two women personally. God’s love knows no partiality.

Jesus takes a personal interest in each one of us. His value system then is the same today. He cares for you as an individual. He meets your individual needs.
Jesus has the right to choose what He brings into our lives, into your life. Through His words in Mark 5, He is telling you to stop being afraid and to keep on believing, to exercise the faith that you have.

Jesus openly demonstrated His love for each woman He met. He treated women as no man had ever treated them before. His warmth, personal attention, tenderness, sound teaching, and compassion toward women were revolutionary. Jesus loves you in the same way.

**Reflect and Respond**
Lesson 6: Clean, Unclean & Being All In or Nothing
(Mark 7:1-9:1)

Day One Study
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 7:1-23

Focus on the Meaning: I heard someone call the group of Pharisees and lawyers “The Bureau of Tapping and Snapping.” They expected the people to do whatever they said without question, even if some of their traditions made no sense. The Pharisees had added many laws to the Law of Moses. These were called “traditions of the elders” and were often held in higher esteem than the Scriptures. The issue of washing hands when coming from the marketplace was not general cleaning of dirt but referred to an elaborate cleaning ritual that removed contamination from the Gentiles who were present in the public areas.

1. Discover the Facts: In today’s passage, Jesus gets “in the face” of His hard-hearted opposition.
   What did the Pharisees and lawyers see (vv. 1-2)?

   What is their accusation (v. 5)?

   What did Jesus say in response to them (vv. 6-7)?

   What is His accusation (v. 8)?

   What example does Jesus give to prove His point (vv. 9-13)?

   What does He say they do to the commands of God (vv. 8, 9, 13)?

   What does Jesus say to the crowd that nullifies the “traditions” and turns it into a heart issue (vv. 14-15)?

   How does He explain this better to His disciples (vv. 18-19)?
What does make a person spiritually dirty (vv. 20-23)?

**From the Greek:** The word *hypocrite* was a Greek theatrical term referring to an actor, a pretender. This was a commonly known cultural term. The actor would do one of two things: 1) hold a mask in front of his face while playing a part on the stage (one who hid his true self under a mask) or 2) contort and exaggerate facial expressions so the entire audience could see them, performing for recognition and applause. Jesus knew the Greek culture around Him and communicated with people in terms they understood.

2. The key issue Jesus expresses in vv. 20-23 is that of the heart. What is the “heart” of man?

**Focus on the Meaning:** The list of sins in vv. 21-22 are not ranked by bad to worse. All sin is bad. Think of the most heinous crime. That’s the ugliness of each one of these sins to God. The consequences are different, though. People and circumstances do not cause our sin. Those things reveal our hearts.

3. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Jesus told the Pharisees and lawyers that they let go, set aside, and nullify the commands of God for their own purposes? How do we do this today to fit in with our culture or our pleasures? Doing so will eventually lead to heartbreak of some kind as we reap the consequences of our actions.

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

**DAY TWO STUDY**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.
Read Mark 7:24-30 and Matthew 15:21-26.

4. Discover the Facts: Avoiding the hostility in Galilee, Jesus heads to Gentile territory. There He meets a woman who becomes a living example of the clean / unclean controversy.

What was Jesus’s plan (v. 24)?

A woman heard about Him. What do we know about her and her situation (vv. 25-26)?

What did she do and say?

How did Jesus test her heart with His response (v. 27)?

What in her response revealed her heart (v. 28)?

What is Jesus’s response (vv. 29-30, Matthew 15:28)?

Scriptural Insight: God desired to bless all people, but He purposed to bless humanity by first blessing the Jews (Genesis 12:3; Acts 3:26; Romans 1:16). In the gospels, Jesus restored Gentiles who came to Him in faith, not turning them away: the demon-possessed man (Mark 5:1-20), the Canaanite woman (Mark 7:24-30), and the Roman Centurion’s servant (Matthew 8:5-13).

5. How did the woman demonstrate faith in what she did and said?

Think About It: Did you recognize her humility and tenaciousness? She basically told Jesus, “I recognize I have no rights. I don’t deserve a thing, but I’m asking anyway.” Jesus was pleased with what He saw in her faith.

6. Read 2 Chronicles 16:9. How does this incident in Jesus’s ministry show that God doesn’t play favorites? In what ways did He demonstrate grace to the woman?
7. Heartbreak to Hope: We all want to get away from such interruptions by needy people at times. Our responses may be governed by our time schedule, biases, and even hard hearts. We cannot meet every need. But, who can meet the spiritual needs of every person? Put yourself in the disciples’ shoes, what should they have done for that woman instead of trying to send her away? What can you do when faced with a need?

Read Mark 7:31-37.

Historical Insight: The Decapolis was a league of 10 independent cities characterized by Greek culture. All but one of them were located east of the Sea of Galilee and the Jordan River. This was Gentile territory. The healed man from Mark 5:19-20 lived there.

8. What grabbed your attention as you read this passage?

9. What truth was Jesus communicating to these Gentile people when He looked up to heaven as He healed the man (v. 34)?

10. Heartbreak to Hope: What in today’s lesson speaks to your heart?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
DAY THREE STUDY
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 8:1-10.
11. Fill out the chart below comparing the feeding of the 5000 (Mark 6) with the feeding of the 4000 (Mark 8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is similar?</th>
<th>What is different?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>vv. 2-3</td>
<td></td>
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<td>vv. 4-5</td>
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<tr>
<td>vv. 6-7</td>
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<td>v. 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>v. 9</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Jesus felt compassion for the crowds. He chose to be kind to them by taking care of not only their spiritual needs through His amazing teaching but also their physical needs through food. Kindness is being tender-hearted plus doing something to meet a need.

12. Heartbreak to Hope: In what ways do you try to be kind? Are you kind in your charity? Do you give what will actually benefit others or just to clean out your closet and pantry? Our kindness lets other people see God as kind and tender-hearted, compassionate. Go ahead, jot down 2 ways that you can be kind to someone in your sphere of influence specifically this week.

Read Mark 8:11-21.
13. Discover the Facts: Jesus is back on the west side of the Sea of Galilee.

What did the Pharisees want this time (v. 11)?

How does Jesus respond (v. 12)?
On the way back across the lake, what were the disciples thinking (v. 14)?

What did Jesus say to them (v. 15)?

What did they hear (v. 16)?

Aware of their discussion, of what does Jesus remind them (vv. 17-21)?

**Focus on the Meaning:** Confirmation is repeatedly put forth that Jesus was and is the Messiah, and He was given complete authority by God here on earth to heal, conquer death, and to forgive us of our sins. This evidence disclaims the statement, “If only I could see a miracle, then I would believe in God.” The Pharisees and other Jews experienced and/or witnessed many miracles first-hand performed by Jesus. Yet, many still did not believe Him to be the Messiah or understand His message. Faith is not based on seeing. It is based on believing.

14. Jesus’s words in v. 15 are like a parent mulling over an incident and dispensing advice to children. What was He trying to tell them?

**Think About It:** Did you think to yourself when you read the Pharisees’ question (v. 11), “Weren’t healings and feedings enough?” I certainly did. What did they really want? Perhaps they wanted Jesus to call fire down from heaven like Elijah did in 1 Kings 18. But then, would that have convinced them? I doubt it. Their hearts were too hard. We, too, must beware of seeking “signs” different from what God has already shown us.

15. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Look at the disciples’ focus in vv. 14, 16. Do you do this? In what ways do you fret about something small and forget all about the power and teachings of the One who is always with you? Ask Jesus to help you stay focused on Him and His goodness to you.
Read Mark 8:22-26.
16. What grabbed your attention as you read this passage?

17. Have you noticed that Jesus took different actions to heal people? Jesus didn’t heal according to a formula. Sometimes He just spoke for it to be done; other times He touched, spit, and spoke. What would be a good reason for Him mixing things up like that?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

DAY FOUR STUDY
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 8:27-30.
18. Discover the Facts: Now Jesus and His disciples are way up north of Galilee near the foot of Mt. Hermon. It’s retreat time again.

What question did Jesus ask His disciples (v. 27)?

Who do people say that Jesus is (v. 28)?

How does Peter answer the personal question, “Who do you say I am?”

What does Jesus tell them?
Scriptural Insight: In Matthew 16:13-19, we learn that Peter's answer was revealed by God. Jesus calls Simon petros, meaning “stone, a piece of a bigger rock.” The bigger rock is the apostles and prophets who know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Christ will build His Church on that foundation. And nothing, including the gates of Hell, will be able to stop the onslaught of the people of God to build the Church. Peter is given the keys of the kingdom, which we later understand meant that he would be present to open doors to the 3 different people groups—the Jews in Acts 2, the Samaritans (half-Jews) in Acts 8, and the Gentiles in Acts 10. The apostles are given the power of binding and loosing. That is not referring to forgiving sins or determining eternal destiny (as in cults or used by the medieval church). It is the ability to authoritatively state what is permitted or forbidden in terms of practices as in Acts 15 and 1 Corinthians 7.

Read Mark 8:31-9:1.

19. Discover the Facts: We are now at a turning point in Mark. Jesus begins to reveal the future to His disciples to prepare them for what's ahead.

What did He teach them (v. 31)?

What did Peter do (v. 32)?

What did Jesus say to him (v. 33)?

To the crowd and the disciples, what does Jesus say (vv. 34-35)?

How does He explain this in vv. 36-37?

What evidence does He give for someone having in mind the things of God or the things of man (v. 38)?

What promise does He make in 9:1?
Focus on the Meaning: 1) Denying oneself does not mean denying your personality, living as an ascetic, or neglecting your physical needs. It does mean saying “no” to selfish interests and earthly securities and turning away from the idolatry of self-centeredness. Following Jesus involves denying your own way of approaching life and adopting God’s way of approaching life. It is a daily choice of obeying God. 2) Taking up one’s cross does not mean to purposely suffer or stoically bear life’s troubles as though having no choices. Carrying the cross in Roman-occupied territory demonstrated submission to the authority against which one had previously rebelled. When Jesus took up His cross, He was submitting to the authority of God and obeying Him. So, taking up your cross represents obedience to God and whatever opportunity or adversity that brings to you. Your choice is this: “I am God’s, or I am my own.” You can’t have it both ways.

20. Because of the phrase “adulterous and sinful generation,” we know that Jesus is addressing those in the crowd who are listening to Him but resisting belief in Him.
   - What does it mean to be ashamed?

   - What would it look like for someone to be ashamed of Christ and His Words?

21. Heartbreak to Hope: Revelation demands a response. Jesus is the Son of God, calling you to follow Him—to approach life God’s way rather than your own way or the world’s way. Choosing His way is rewarding.
   - What rewards have you received from choosing God’s way of doing life over the world’s way?

   - What challenges have you faced for choosing God’s way of doing life over the world’s way?

22. Heartbreak to Hope: Reflect back on this whole lesson, how did someone experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty find hope, healing and love?
Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
Lesson 7: Glory, Honesty, & Serious Pride Issues
(Mark 9:2-10:52)

In Mark 9 and 10, Jesus addresses a bunch of heart attitude adjustments His followers need to make based on what He told them in Mark 8:34. Deny yourself and listen to Him (God confirms this one!).

Day One Study
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

   - Who did Jesus take with Him to the mountain (v. 2)?

   What happened there (vv. 2-3)? See also Matthew 17:2.

   Who showed up (v. 4)?

   What were they doing? See also Luke 9:31.

   What is Peter’s response to what he saw (vv. 5-6)?

   What is God’s response to Peter and the others (v. 7)?

   As they were coming down the mountain, what happened (vv. 9-10)?

   What question did they ask (v. 11)?

   What is Jesus’s response (vv. 12-13)?
Scriptural Insight: An angel told John the Baptist’s parents that their son “would go before the Lord and minister in the spirit and power of Elijah, to...make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17). Jesus explains in Matthew 11:14 that John the Baptist would have been the Elijah who was to come had the Israelites believed Christ was the Messiah. The religious leaders, however, would not accept God’s way that was being proclaimed by Jesus and John. So, in essence, the prophecy was only partially fulfilled. John the Baptist did fulfill the part about being the Messiah’s forerunner (Malachi 3:1; 4:5). But the people’s hearts were hard, and they did not turn their hearts toward God.

2. What is being revealed through the transfiguration? See also Philippians 2:6-7 and 2 Corinthians 4:6.

3. Heartbreak to Hope: What confirmation does the presence of Moses and Elijah give to us as believers? Are you confident that there is life with God beyond the grave for you? If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you are guaranteed eternal life with God after you die. Read John 5:24 for that confirmation.

Read Mark 9:14-32.

Scriptural Insight: At this point in Mark’s gospel, Jesus had foretold His arrest, death, and resurrection to His disciples four times. The women who followed Him also heard Him speak of this upcoming event (Luke 24:8).

4. Discover the Facts: Off the mountain and back to real life, Jesus responds to a father’s need and the disciples’ lack.

What did Jesus notice about the disciples who remained behind (vv. 14-15)?

What does He ask (v. 16)?

What is the situation (vv. 17-18)?

What does Jesus say (v. 19)?
How long has the boy been like this?

What does the father say to Jesus after telling about his boy (v. 22)?

What does Jesus declare?

For what does the father now ask (v. 24)?

After healing the boy, Jesus is indoor with the disciples. What do they ask Him (v. 28)?

What needed to be done (v. 29)?

What was Jesus’s main mission at this point (v. 30)?

**Scriptural Insight:** We have seen Jesus drive out demons from many people in His ministry. But, not all troubles He encountered were caused by demons. Having an unhealthy focus on demons can be dangerous and distracting for believers. Instead, choose to be Jesus-conscious rather than demon-conscious. Jesus is greater than all angels, including Satan and his demons. Jesus lives in you through His Holy Spirit — God is in you. Demons have no authority over you. You should be aware that they exist and beware of their deceptive nature. Bad things can happen because we live in a broken world or because people make bad choices. Demons are not behind everything bad that happens. For example, the Bible does not say that the storms in Mark 4 and 6 were demonic.

The disciples had driven out evil spirits when Jesus sent them on mission (Mark 6:12-13). Jesus’s answer in Mark 9:29 implies that they didn’t pray before trying to drive out the demon. Perhaps their success in the past led them to think they could handle this themselves. But, they could not. That is the danger of success.

**Think About It:** Here is a key truth. Human parents raise their children to become more independent and less dependent on them. God raises His children to become more dependent on Him and less independent of Him.

5. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Experiencing success makes us most vulnerable to becoming self-sufficient, unguarded against temptation, uncorrectable or unteachable, and complacent.
Have you experienced this in your life? You can overcome that by recognizing your vulnerability, confessing your need for God, and renewing your dependence on God.

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

**DAY TWO STUDY**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 9:33-37.

   - What did Jesus notice (v. 33)?

   What is the disciples’ response (v. 34)?

   Taking advantage of this teachable moment, what does Jesus do and say (vv. 35-37)?

7. What is Jesus trying to communicate to the Twelve about their role as servant leaders?

*Think About It*: To achieve His purposes, God chooses to use nobodies (like the disciples) to display His power and grace as they rely on Him. He chooses to use somebodies (like Paul) when they give up dependence on their natural abilities and resources to rely on Him. Either way, the key is dependence on Him.
Read Mark 9:38-41.

8. Summarize what you just read.

Think About It: Someone described this example as being on the same team but in different positions. Could this apply to denominational divisions in our modern world? As long as all believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, they are on the same team. What do you think?

Read Mark 9:42-50.

9. Jesus uses a lot of exaggeration in this passage to make a point for His disciples. Relate what He teaches here to the dissension and competition expressed in vv. 33-41.

10. What truth is expressed in v. 48?

11. Heartbreak to Hope: What in today’s lesson speaks to your heart?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
DAY THREE STUDY

Scriptural Insight: Between 9:50 and 10:1, Mark left out a lot of Jesus's ministry activities. You can read Luke 10-18 and John 7-10 to fill in the gap.

Read Mark 10:1-12.
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

12. Discover the Facts: Jesus is leaving Galilee for the last time, heading to the south.
   What is the test question from the Pharisees this time (v. 2)?

   How does Jesus respond (v. 3)?

   After hearing their answer, what does Jesus teach them about God’s intention (vv. 5-9)?

   What additional explanation does Jesus give to His disciples (vv. 11-12)?

   Scriptural Insight: The certificates of divorce referenced in Deuteronomy 24 were given to protect the rights of women. Women abandoned by their husbands would be left destitute in that culture. The certificate of divorce allowed them to remarry. Jesus stressed that God created man and woman at the beginning of creation (Genesis 1) and instituted marriage between a man and a woman at that time as a covenant (Genesis 2). Divorce was permitted after the act of adultery by one spouse because that violates the covenant and breaks the marriage bond (Matthew 19:9). Is divorce lawful? Yes. Is it God’s will? No. Is adultery covered by the cross? Yes. Is remarriage honored by God? Yes, it is a covenant recognized by God.

   Read “Principles of Marriage and Divorce” at the end of this lesson for additional insight.

Read Mark 10:13-16.
13. Discover the Facts: Jesus loves the little children.
   Why were people bringing their children?

   How did the disciples react (v. 13)?
What is Jesus’s emotional response to His disciples (v. 14)?

What does He say to them?

What does He then do to demonstrate what He just said?

Think About It: Jesus not only blessed the children (what the parents wanted), but He also took them in His arms and put His hands on them while blessing them. Our God always does more than we ask.

14. How does anyone receive the kingdom of God like a little child?

Focus on the Meaning: Do little children go to heaven when they die? Mark 10:14 is a verse that gives us confidence that they do. We can conclude this not because they have been baptized or because the parents are believers. It is not because children are innocent of sin or that they are not morally accountable. The kingdom of heaven belongs to little children. It is their property. Since Scripture only addresses the issue of adults as believers or unbelievers, it can be surmised that the salvation of babies and small children is God’s concern, not ours. We can be confident that children go to heaven when they die because the blood of Jesus Christ was provided for their account. Young children have not rejected the blood of Jesus. It is there to cover their sins, washing them clean, And, it is the character of God to apply that blood even though they cannot believe for themselves because they are too young. For more information, go to backtothebible.org/is-my-child-in-heaven.

15. Heartbreak to Hope: Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”

• How do we help children come to Him?

• How do we hinder children from coming to Him?
Read Mark 10:17-31.

16. **Discover the Facts:** Jesus issues a tough challenge to a young man.

What happens in v. 17?

What is Jesus’s response (vv. 18-19)?

How does the man confidently answer (v. 20)?

How does Jesus feel about this man?

What challenge does He give him (v. 21)?

What is revealed about the man’s real need (vv. 22-23)?

**Scriptural Insight:** Jesus asked the rich young ruler to surrender his fortune in order to know true riches (Mark 10:21). He asked the young boy to surrender his meager lunch so that thousands could feast (John 6:5-13). He asked the disciples to surrender their plans, their dreams, their very lives, to follow Him (Matthew 4:18-22, Luke 5:1-22). And He asks us to surrender our rights, our reputation, our possessions, and our security. He wants our dreams and desires, our losses and our loves. Why? Because He knows that what He offers is better by far than anything we are holding onto. He knows that surrendering everything we have and everything we are to Him yields joy, purpose and peace that we cannot possess any other way. He knows that when we put our pain, loss and regret into His loving hands we will finally begin to experience the healing and the hope we long for. (Woven, *The Truth about Redemption Next Step,* “Redeeming Hope: Your journey Toward Surrender”)

17. Summarize Jesus’s explanation to His disciples (vv. 23-27)? See also Mark 9:23.
**Focus on the Meaning:** In their mind, money equals blessings from God. If the rich man who has supposedly been blessed by God can’t be saved by doing good works, how can any of the rest of us poor folks ever be saved? We know the answer is by faith alone, not works.

18. What is the reward for transferring your allegiance from people and material comforts to Jesus and the gospel He preaches (vv. 29-31)?

19. **Heartbreak to Hope:** What in today’s lesson speaks to your heart?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

**Day Four Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 10:32-45.**

20. **Discover the Facts:** After spending quite a bit of time avoiding Jerusalem, Jesus is now leading the way to that city, astonishing the Twelve with another prediction of what would happen to Him there. Then comes another teachable moment for them. If you remember the “Who is the greatest?” conversation (Mark 9:34), it picks up again here.

Who comes to Jesus and with what request (vv. 35-37)? See also Matthew 20:20.

What is Jesus’s reply (v. 38)?

What do James and John boldly declare (v. 39)?
What does Jesus declare (vv. 39-40)?

When the other ten heard about this, what happened?

Jesus calls them together for some teaching. How does the world structure authority (v. 42)?

But, how will it be for the servants of Jesus (vv. 43-44)?

Write v. 45 in the space below. This is considered the key verse for Mark.

**Scriptural Insight:** Matthew wrote that their mother, Salome, the sister of Jesus’s mother, voiced their request for them (Matthew 20:20). Mark put the words in their own mouths, because the request came from their hearts, even though Salome may have spoken them. Perhaps they thought their family connection with Jesus justified their request. James and John were Jesus’s cousins (cf. Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25). Frequently rulers appointed close family members to important government positions. *(Dr. Constable’s Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, p. 158)*

21. How did Jesus serve while He was on earth?

22. What does He mean when He says that He gives His life as a ransom for many?
Focus on the Meaning: What Jesus did for us is called “redemption.” Redemption means to set something or someone free from bondage by paying a ransom. Jesus's blood was the purchase price that redeemed us from our bondage to sin. We can now choose to obey our new master who has greater power living inside of us—the Spirit of God Himself—who can give us freedom from any entrapping sin. We have also been released into freedom to serve God in obedience, as He leads us to do what is good out of hearts of love and gratitude.

23. Heartbreak to Hope: Servant leadership is powerful in God’s business. Jesus described a servant leader as one who served those within her influence to lead them more than lording over them with her power. How can you be a servant leader in your sphere of influence—at work, at home, at church, and in the community? What would that look like?

Read Mark 10:46-52.

24. What grabbed your attention in this passage?

25. Look at Mark 10:36 and 10:51 where Jesus asked the same question of different people. Contrast the motives of the individuals involved.

26. Heartbreak to Hope: Reflect back on this whole lesson, how did someone experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty find hope, healing and love?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
Principles on Marriage and Divorce

**Principle #1: God created male and female in the beginning. Genesis 1:26-28**

Men and women were created individually in the image of God. Both together were given the first command to mankind in the Bible—to flourish, to fill the earth with their kind, and to exercise dominion and stewardship over the earth including the other earthly creatures.

**Principle #2: Marriage is one man and one woman united for life. Genesis 2:18, 24-25; Matthew 19:4-6**

In the beginning, God chose to create and bring together the first man and woman in marriage. The man and woman were from then on to leave their parents, form a covenant with one another, and unite into a new family unit, no longer under the protective custody of their parents. God gives men and women the freedom to choose their own marriage partners following the pattern and instructions He gave for the next generations.

Being “united” refers to an inseparable union of which sexual intercourse is a picture. They are no longer two, but one. Since this is by God’s design, when a man and woman marry, forming that fleshly union, they are under God’s authority (“God has joined together”). According to Jesus, neither the man nor the woman nor any other human is to separate (Greek chorizeto = “divorce”) them.

**Principle #3: Divorce is opposite God’s covenantal nature. Malachi 2:13-16**

As sin affected the God/man relationship, it also infiltrated and infected human-to-human relationships, including marriage. Divorce breaks a covenant of which God is the witness so is opposite God’s faithful nature. As God stayed faithful to His covenant partner, Israel, so should a husband/wife stay faithful to his/her marriage partner.

One of the purposes of marriage is to provide an environment to produce godly offspring. Separating a married couple through divorce may reduce this opportunity as it brings “violence” to the family. God hates divorce the same as He hates other sin such as haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent, a heart that plots evil, feet that race to do wrong, a false witness who pours out lies, and a person who sows discord among brothers. (Proverbs 6:16-19, same Hebrew word)

**Principle #4: Before Christ, divorce was permitted to control the consequences of man’s sin. Matthew 19:8; Deuteronomy 22:23, 24**

God divinely provided a way to deal with situations brought about by men’s hard hearts toward their wives and to protect from its worst effects those who would suffer as a result of it. Throughout the Old Testament are such provisions made to limit and control the consequences of man’s sinfulness (the cities of refuge, for example). Legal divorce is better than desertion. It appears that the divorced spouse is not condemned in this case.

**Principle #5: Since marriage is a physical union, only a physical cause can break it such as death or fornication. Romans 7:1-3; Matthew 5:32; 19:9**

Marital unfaithfulness could include adultery committed during the marriage or betrothal period, illegitimate marriages (incestuous ones), or a relentless persistent lifestyle of unfaithfulness (prostitution, pornography). Although adultery was punishable by death, occupation by the Romans prevented this from being carried out in Jesus’s day. Since the marriage covenant is already broken
by one spouse, the faithful spouse has permission to seek a divorce and is free to marry again without it being considered adultery. It appears that divorce in this case is not considered sin for the violated spouse. Under Roman law, a wife could divorce her husband. Under traditional Jewish law, she could not.

Principle #6: Two Christians who are married to one another are to remain married. If they divorce, they are to remain unmarried or be reconciled. 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

The controlling principle throughout this chapter (1 Corinthians 7) in Paul’s letter is to “Stay as you are” when you become a Christian. Paul confirms what Jesus already stated in Matthew 19. Those believers who are already married to one another must recognize the permanence of their commitment, as was taught by the Lord Jesus, and not seek divorce. If they do divorce, each is to remain unmarried or be reconciled. Does the exception of marital unfaithfulness apply to believers? Yes, because the covenant is broken in a physical way. However, reconciliation and forgiveness is the better way.

Adultery does not mandate divorce, but God does allow divorce as a consequence of adultery. It’s even better for the unfaithful spouse to repent, for the violated spouse to forgive and for them to forge a new, stronger relationship. This isn’t always possible due to the hardness of some people’s hearts, and God understands and allows for it. (Sue Bohlin, Probe Answers Questions about Specifics, “Am I Committing Adultery?”)

Principle #7: A Christian with a non-Christian spouse is to remain married unless the unbeliever is unwilling to live with his/her Christian spouse. Then, the believer should release him/her in peace and is free to remain single or to remarry another Christian only. 1 Corinthians 7:12-15, 39

Once again, the controlling principle throughout this chapter in Paul’s letter is to “Stay as you are” when you become a Christian if possible. Jesus did not specifically address this situation in His teachings, but Paul based his response on Jesus’s teaching on marriage and human relationships in general. If the unbelieving spouse does not object to the husband/wife becoming a Christian and is willing to remain married, they are to do so.

The unbeliever may be saved through the witness of the believing spouse. (1 Corinthians 7:14; 1 Peter 3:1-2) God will be actively working in that house because His child is in that house. The goal is for the Christian spouse to preserve the marriage union and live “in peace” with the non-Christian, but with the understanding that marriage is a mutual not a unilateral relationship.

However, the unbeliever may also continue to reject Christ. In the case of an unbelieving spouse not willing to live with a husband/wife who has become a Christian, the Christian is to let the unbeliever free. Don’t live in turmoil because of it. Divorce initiated by the unbeliever on these grounds is not condemned.

Principle #8: A Christian whose spouse has died is free to remain single or to remarry another Christian only. 1 Corinthians 7:39

Since death breaks the covenant, the widow or widower is completely free to remarry, provided that the new spouse is a believer.

Principle #9: Singleness is a gift from God and demands sexual purity. 1 Corinthians 7:7-9

In Jewish law, marriage was obligatory for all men except the sexually impotent. Being enabled to be married or to stay single is considered a gift of God. “Satisfied singleness” is good. The one who is unsatisfied to refrain from sexual experience as a single should recognize that God has gifted
them for marriage. Neither being a chaste single nor being a faithful married partner is a higher calling. Neither staying single nor getting married is sin.

Sources:
1. Dr. Tom Constable’s Notes on Mark
2. Walvoord and Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Old Testament
4. Tim Stevenson, First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians, pages 7.1-7.4
5. Sue Bohlin, Probe Answers Questions about Specifics, “Am I Committing Adultery?”
Lesson 8: A Parade, Housecleaning, and Lots of Tests!
(Mark 11:1-12:44)

Day One Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 11:1-11.

1. **Discover the Facts**: By comparing the four gospels, we can determine that Jesus got to Bethany on Friday and rested on Saturday (the Sabbath). Now it’s time for Him to present Himself to His people. Expectations are high!

What are Jesus’s instructions to two disciples (vv. 2-3)?

What did they find (vv. 4-6)?

What did the disciples do for Jesus (v. 7)?

What did the people do for Jesus (v. 8)?

What did they shout (vv. 9-10)? See also Psalm 118:25-26.

Jesus accepted their worship. Then, what did He do (v. 11)? See also Luke 19:41-44.

**From the Greek**: Hosanna (Greek) comes from hosiahna (Hebrew) meaning “O save us now,” a prayer addressed to God. Over time, it became a shout of praise like “Hallelujah.” Chanting “Hosanna” and “Hosanna in the highest” became part of the traditional Passover celebration. The Jews seeing Jesus on the donkey entering Jerusalem were filled with hope that Jesus was their promised Messiah.

2. What was Jesus deliberately doing now that He had been avoiding before this?
Read Mark 11:12-26.

3. **Discover the Facts**: This is another “sandwich” section—vv. 12-14 and vv. 20-26 are related. The clearing of the Temple comes in the middle.

What happened with the fig tree (vv. 12-14)?

In the Court of the Gentiles at the Temple, what four things did Jesus do (vv. 15-16)?

Of what did He remind those watching and listening (v. 17)?

How did the religious leaders take Jesus’s actions (v. 18)?

After spending the night outside of Jerusalem, what did they see the next morning (v. 20)?

**Scriptural Insight**: A marketplace atmosphere existed in the court of the Gentiles, the outermost courtyard within the temple enclosure (Gr. hieron, cf. v. 17). During Passover season, pilgrims could buy sacrificial animals and change their money on the Mount of Olives, so there was no need to set up facilities to do these things in the temple courtyard—which Caiaphas [the High Priest] had done. Jesus’s literal housecleaning represented His authority as Messiah to clean up the corrupt nation of Israel. Verse 16, unique in Mark, shows the extent to which Jesus went in purifying the temple. [They were using the Temple courts as a shortcut to the Roman highway outside of town.] *(Dr. Constable’s Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, p. 168)*

4. The fig tree became an object lesson. It represented Israel. Jesus’s request of fruit from it represented His presence and the last chance before Israel would be judged as fruitless. Jesus then used hyperbole (exaggeration) to illustrate some things about faith and prayer in vv. 22-25 that are impossible without God. What does He tell them?
Focus on the Meaning: We must beware of taking v. 24 out of context. Rather than explaining the symbolic significance of the cursing of the fig tree, Jesus proceeded to focus on the means by which the miracle happened. ... The point was that dependent trust in God can accomplish humanly impossible things through prayer (cf. James 1:6). God is the source of the power to change. "Moving a mountain" is a universal symbol of doing something that appears to be impossible (cf. Zechariah 4:7). Jesus presupposed that overcoming the difficulty in view was God’s will. A true disciple of Jesus would hardly pray for anything else (Matthew 6:10). The person praying can therefore believe that what he requests will happen because it is God’s will. He will neither doubt God’s ability to do what he requests, since God can do anything, nor will he doubt that God will grant his petition, since it is God’s will. He will not have a divided heart about this matter. (Dr. Constable’s Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, p. 170)

What the merchants were doing at the Temple is similar to having Facebook ads on the screens in a church service today during communion and prayer time. It would distract people from worshiping God. Can churches offer books and tickets for sale in the lobby? Yes. God’s temple now is the gathered people not the building (see 1 Corinthians 3:16, directed to the community not individuals). The building is not God’s house; it’s just a building used by the people of God for gathering together. And, yes, we should be cognizant of first impressions when people visit our building.

5. Heartbreak to Hope: What in today’s lesson speaks to your heart?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.


**Day Two Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 11:27-33.**

6. **Discover the Facts:** Now begins a series of tests for Jesus, trying to make Him do something that changes the popular opinion of Him. Here’s Test #1.

   Where is Jesus?

   Who comes to Him?

   What is the question (v. 28)?

   Jesus answers with a question of His own. What is it (vv. 29-30)?

   How do the leaders respond (vv. 31-32)?

   Then, what does Jesus say?

   **Think About It:** The religious leaders issued the challenge but weren’t really interested in the answer. This is a case of intellectual dishonesty. Do you know anyone like that?

**Read Mark 12:1-12.**

7. Instead of answering their question, Jesus tells a parable that reveals their motives and lets them know the consequences of their actions before they even take them. This parable has recognizable parts to it. The listeners knew exactly what Jesus was saying.

   Who owns the vineyard?

   Where is the vineyard?

   Who are the tenants?

   What did they do to the son of the owner?

   What then will the owner of the vineyard do?
What does Jesus declare in vv. 10-11?

How does what Jesus say in the parable connect with Mark 11:28?

What attitude / mindset of the religious leaders does Jesus bring out in v. 7?

How did the religious leaders respond (v. 12)?

**Think About It:** Hard hearts don't change with kindness, challenges, warnings, or consequences. Hard hearts can only be changed from the inside by one's decision to give up rebellion against God and submit to His authority. Jesus shot an arrow directly at their need to submit their authority to God and recognize Jesus as being sent from Him.

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

**Day Three Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 12:13-17.**

8. **Discover the Facts:** Here comes Test #2. Actually, these are more like traps than tests.

   Who comes to Jesus?

   Why (v. 13)?

   What do they admit about Him (v. 14)?

   What is their test question?
What did Jesus know about them (v. 15)?

What question does He ask (v. 15)?

What does He tell them to do (v. 15)?

When they bring the coin, what question does He ask (v. 16)?

Then, how does He answer their test question (v. 17)?

What is their response?

**Historical Insight:** Since Judea had become a Roman province in A.D. 6, the Romans had required the Jews to pay a yearly "poll (head) tax" into the emperor's treasury. The Zealots later refused to pay it, claiming that payment acknowledged Rome's right to rule over them. The Pharisees paid it but objected strongly to it. The Herodians paid it willingly since they supported Roman rule. (Dr. Constable's Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, pp. 176-177)

9. The "Caesar" part we can figure out. But, what do you think Jesus meant when He said, give "to God what is God's?"

**Read Mark 12:18-27.**

**Historical Insight:** The "Sadducees" were mainly urban, wealthy, and educated Jews. Their numbers were comparatively few, but they occupied important positions including many in the priesthood. Their influence was greater than their size as a party within Judaism. This is the only place Mark mentioned them. They claimed to believe only what the Old Testament taught, and they did not follow the traditions of the elders that the Pharisees observed. They did not believe in the "resurrection," because they said they could find no clear revelation about it in the Old Testament. (Dr. Constable's Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, p. 178)
10. **Discover the Facts**: We are now at Test (Trap) #3.

   What is the hypothetical situation presented by the Sadducees (vv. 19-22)?

   What is their test question (v. 23)?

   What is Jesus’s response to them (v. 24)?

   What truth is presented in v. 25?

   What proof does He present that there is life after death (vv. 26-27)?

**Historical Insight**: Resurrection in the ancient world was understood to be this: physical life after a time of life after death. The Greeks thought it a foolish idea since in their minds anything material (what you could see and touch like bodies) was evil. So, why would anyone want to have another body? However, God created the human body as something good. The cross (crucified Messiah) was a stumbling block to the Jews, and the resurrection was foolishness to the Gentiles. But, God’s plan represents the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24) to all those who believe.

11. **Heartbreak to Hope**: In His answer to the Sadducees (v. 24), Jesus pointed out their illiteracy of the Scriptures and their disregard for the power of God. This is a common occurrence today as well. Do you know people who are going through pain and heartache but refuse to look to the Word of God and the power of God for answers? Why do you think they resist the truth so much? How can you specifically pray for them?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
Day Four Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 12:28-34.

12. Discover the Facts: Here comes Test #4, But, this time it is from someone who seems to be sincerely asking the question.

   Who comes to Jesus?

   What does he hear?

   What is his test question (v. 28)?

   Jesus starts with the Jewish basic declaration about their God from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. Write Jesus’s answer from vv. 30-31 in the space below.

   What is the lawyer’s response to this (vv. 32-33)?

   What encouragement does Jesus give to the man (v. 34)?

   From then on, what happened?

Focus on the Meaning: The lawyer showed he had faith. Most of the religious leaders had degenerated from a personal relationship with God to outward practice of religion without heart. God wants your heart—the seat of your affections.
13. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Loving your neighbor as yourself means going beyond the minimum standard of just being nice to someone. Jesus demonstrated going the extra step to love those around you. Example: when someone annoys you, the minimum would be not bad-mouthing that person. The heart of Jesus would lead you to find something kind to say to that person. Think of other examples from your life where you could go beyond the minimum to “love your neighbor as yourself.”

**Read Mark 12:35-40.**

14. **Discover the Facts:** Jesus issues the next test while He is teaching the crowds.

   - What is Jesus doing (v. 35)?

   - What is His question?

   He quotes from what is called a Messianic psalm because it references the Messiah. Who wrote the psalm and who gave him the words to write (v. 36)?


   - How does the crowd respond?

   - What warning does He give next and why (vv. 38-40)?

15. What is the answer to Jesus’s question in v. 37? See also Romans 1:1-4 and Colossians 2:9.
16. In what ways are the teachers of the law opposite of Jesus’s description of servant leaders in Mark 10:43-45?

Read Mark 12:41-44.

17. Discover the Facts: Jesus was continually “people watching” and teaching His disciples about people. In this section, He presents a contrast to His disciples of someone representing the heart for God that the teachers of the law lacked.

Where are they?

What do they see in v. 41?

What do they see in v. 42?

What did Jesus see in her heart attitude that He wanted His disciples to grasp? (vv. 43-44)?

18. Heartbreak to Hope: What is your take-away from this lesson that you will apply to your own life?

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
Lesson 9: Prophecy, Perfume and Passover
(Mark 13:1-14:42)

**DAY ONE STUDY**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 13:1-37.**

The disciples get a glimpse of the future, beyond the cross and grave that Jesus was already telling them to expect. We’ll cover this sermon of Jesus in 5 parts. We may not know the when and the how. But, there are specific things we can know. At the end of each section, we’ll focus on what those are.

1. **Discover the Facts, Part 1:** Focus on vv. 1-8.
   - What did the disciples see (v. 1)?

   What did Jesus say to them (v. 2)? Note: this destruction took place in 70 A.D.

   Where were they sitting now?

   What did Andrew ask?

   What is the first thing that Jesus says in response and why (v. 5)?

   Summarize what He says in vv. 7-8.

   How are we to respond to these bad events?
What We Can Know #1: Conditions on this planet are not going to get better but worse! We can forget about the idea of world peace until Jesus comes back.


What will happen to Jesus’s disciples (v. 9)?

What must happen before the end comes (v. 10)?

Scriptural Insight: This is the responsibility of every generation of disciples (Matt. 28:19). "Must" (Gr. dei) indicates divine necessity. God wants this to happen, and it will happen. This verse is not a promise that if disciples will preach the gospel to all nations in a particular generation, God will then begin the kingdom. Man cannot bring in the kingdom by the universal preaching of the gospel. God will bring it in at His appointed time. This is not a promise that everyone will become a believer in Jesus, either. (Dr. Constable’s Notes on Mark 2017 Edition, p. 189)

What are they not to do when they are arrested and why (v. 11)?

What is the warning in vv. 12-13?

From the Greek: “Saved” in v. 13 comes from the Greek word sozo, meaning “to be kept safe, to rescue from danger or destruction.” Rescue comes from the persecution ending, by death, or by Jesus’s second coming. This is not a salvation verse; it is an encouragement to persevere.

What We Can Know #2: Persecutions and betrayals will affect Christians until Jesus returns. He’ll give us strength to endure them plus words to say, and we are not to live in fear.


Mark skips over the destruction of Jerusalem that Matthew and Luke include. That was a taste of future desolation. Read Luke 21:24. We are in the “until” time, “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” Jesus finally answers their question from v. 4.

What is the one sign they will see and recognize? See also Daniel 9:25-27.

What are they to do when that happens (vv. 14-16)?
On whom will this time be especially hard and why (vv. 17-18)?

What did Jesus say about this calamity (v. 19)?

**Think About It:** Since WWII was worse than the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., we know that this tribulation hasn’t happened yet.

Why has God limited that awful time of Tribulation to just 7 years (we learn this from Daniel and Revelation)?

What can happen to Christians during that time of distress and waiting (vv. 21-22)?

So, what should you do to protect yourself (v. 23)?

**What We Can Know #3:** This great time of worldwide massive tribulation hasn’t happened yet. The destruction of Jerusalem was not the worst that had happened before or even since that time. It is still to come.

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
DAY TWO STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 13:24-37.

We will continue to cover this sermon of Jesus.

4. **Discover the Facts, Part 4:** Focus on vv. 24-31.
   
   Following that distress, what signs will show in the heavens (vv. 24-25)?
   
   At that time, what will everyone on earth see (v. 26)? See also Mark 8:38.
   
   What is promised in v. 27 to give us comfort?
   
   What is the lesson of the fig tree (vv. 28-29)?
   
   What is the promise in vv. 30-31?

   **What We Can Know #4:** Jesus is physically coming back to planet Earth, and no one is going to miss it this time. We just don’t know when. What does Jesus mean by “this generation?” It could be the Jews. It is probably not a number of years. Luke 21:24 tells us that the Jews will be scattered worldwide at that time.

5. **Discover the Facts, Part 5:** Focus on vv. 32-37.

   Who determines the time for the Tribulation and the Second Coming (v. 32)?
   
   Can we figure it out (v. 33)?
   
   What can we do or should we do while waiting?
   
   Why stay alert?
What is the job of the door keeper in the parable Jesus told in vv. 34-37?

**What We Can Know #5:** Jesus leaves His disciples here with certain responsibilities. To them and to all of us, He says, “Stay alert. Watch out that no one deceives you. Be doing my work daily.”


7. The word translated “watch out” means “to see and discern.” Jesus tells them to watch out for deception several times in this sermon (Mark 13:9, 23, 33, 35, and 37). What is the danger of deception?

**Think About It:** A disciple’s greatest danger is not war, not calamity, not persecution, or even betrayal. It is DECEPTION. Deception affects the direction our minds are going and where our bodies follow.

8. **Heartbreak to Hope:** You are to “watch out that no one deceives you” from following Christ. What are you tempted to follow more than Christ?

Read “Avoiding Deception Trails” at the end of this lesson for more application of Mark 13.

**Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.**
Day Three Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.


9. **Discover the Facts**: Jesus was spending time with His friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Something beautiful happens.
   - What did they religious leaders want (v. 1)?
   
   But not when (v. 2)? Why?
   
   Where were they (v. 3)?
   
   What did Mary do (v. 3)?
   
   What was the disciples' emotional reaction and why (vv. 4-5)? See also John 12:4-6.
   
   Look at Jesus’s response to them (vv. 6-9). List all that He said about her to His disciples.
   
   What happened next (vv. 10-11)?

10. What did Jesus mean by “she did what she could” (v. 8)?
11. **Heartbreak to Hope:** The same thing that Jesus said about Mary is true for you. Think about your daily work where you are using your resources, God-given temperament, opportunity and love to honor and worship Jesus. In what ways can it be said of you, “She did what she could?”

Read Mark 14:12-26.

12. **Discover the Facts:** Jesus introduces to His disciples a way to remember His sacrifice in what is called “The Lord’s Supper.” We know it as communion.

What day is it?

What did the disciples ask Jesus (v. 12)?

What are Jesus’s directions to them (vv. 13-15)?

That evening, how did Jesus shock the Twelve (v. 18)?

What is their response (v. 19)?

What does Jesus declare next (vv. 20-21)?

**Think About It:** John 13:27 says that Satan entered Judas who then left. Jesus warned him but that didn’t stop him. Throughout the Bible, God warns people of their actions before they take them. That’s His love and grace. Yet, many ignore His warning.

What does Jesus do in v. 22?

What does He do in v. 23?
What does He say about drinking from the cup? See also Jeremiah 31:31-34.

What does He promise them (v. 25)?

Most of John 13-17 takes place between v. 25 and v. 26. What did they do afterwards (v. 26)?

Think About It: Each of the disciples thought he was capable of betrayal (v. 19). The world is full of betayers. Betrayal will happen, but woe to the one who allowed himself to be used.

13. Heartbreak to Hope: Have you been betrayed by a friend? Read Hebrews 4:15-16. Jesus understands how you feel about betrayal and everything else you experience in life. Pour out your heart to Him. Ask Him for help to overcome the hurt you feel and wisdom to know what to do about that relationship.

Scriptural Insight: Although Jesus Christ is now in a glorified human body in Heaven, He is with us by means of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is "God's Empowering Presence" in our lives. That is what He is and does. He enables us to feel God's love for us, and He fills us with hope that God is at work within us and for us according to His promises. When we are weak, He carries our prayer needs directly to God the Father or God the Son and then works in our lives according to what is needed for us. At times of crisis, we can have confidence that our God both hears our need and is acting upon it on our behalf.

Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.
DAY FOUR STUDY
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.
Read Mark 14:27-31.
14. Discover the Facts: Jesus shares words of caution to His disciples.
   What does Jesus tell them (v. 27)?

   After that, what will happen (v. 28)?

   What does Peter declare (v. 29)?

   How does Jesus answer him (v. 30)?

   What is Peter’s emphatic response (v. 31)?

   Was he alone in saying this?


Read Mark 14:32-42.
16. Discover the Facts: Jesus understands how we feel when we’re about to face something awful. He’s been there.
   Where did they go?

   What did Jesus say in v. 32?
Whom did Jesus take with Him (v. 33)?

What did He begin to feel and why?

What does Jesus tell them about how He feels (v. 34)?

Then, what does He ask them to do?

What did Jesus do (v. 35)?

What did He call God (v. 36)?

**Focus on the Meaning:** "Abba Father" is expressive of an especially close relationship to God. It is informal and intimate, similar to saying, “Daddy.” We can call God “Abba Father,” also. See Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.

What does He say about God?

What does Jesus ask?

What does He say in submission?

What does He find when He returns to the disciples (v. 37)?

How does Jesus warn Peter again (v. 38)?

Read Luke 22:43-44. What was happening to Jesus during this third time of prayer?
What does Jesus declare to His disciples in Mark 14:41-42?

**Think About It:** The words of Mark 14:42 are words of courage. Through prayer and God’s strengthening, Jesus is prepared for the battle ahead. He chose God’s will, which included suffering. No Christian ever chooses suffering. She should choose God’s will, as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.

17. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Peter, like the rest of the disciples, made a vow of good intentions. Good intentions are just that—intentions—until you make them intentional actions. Our natural humanity cannot follow up on good intentions. We must pray and trust in Jesus to help us turn good intentions into intentional actions.

- What good intentions have you promised or planned to do but have not followed up with intentional actions?

- What will you trust Jesus to do in your life to help you carry through with at least one of those good intentions?

18. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Reflect back on this whole lesson, how did someone experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty find hope, healing and love?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
Avoiding Deception Trails

To many of us, the Bible’s prophetic teaching about the end times is like a wilderness—remote, hard to access, and challenging to navigate. The more you get into it, the more you feel lost. Just as there are many trails that cross in a wilderness, there are many beliefs about prophecy. After a bit of study, it all begins to get more complicated, like Jesus’s teaching in Mark 13. But, it’s really not if we stick with what we can know:

- **What We Can Know #1 (vv. 7-8):** Jesus said conditions on this planet are not going to get better but worse! We can forget the idea of world peace until He comes back.

- **What We Can Know #2 (vv. 9-13):** Persecutions and betrayals will affect Christians until Jesus returns. He’ll give us strength to endure them plus words to say, and we are not to be afraid.

- **What We Can Know #3 (vv. 14-23):** This great time of worldwide, massive tribulation hasn’t happened yet. The destruction of Jerusalem was not the worst that had happened before or even since that time. It is still to come.

- **What We Can Know #4 (vv. 24-27):** Jesus is physically coming back to planet Earth, and no one is going to miss it. Isn’t that good news? We just don’t know when.

- **What We Can Know #5 (vv. 33-37):** Jesus is leaving His disciples behind with certain responsibilities. To them and to all of us, He says, “Stay alert.”

While studying this passage, I was struck by how often Jesus warns His disciples to “watch out,” “be on guard,” and “stay alert.” 8 times. Why? Stay alert to what? I looked at all His teaching and concluded that a disciple’s greatest danger is not war, not calamity, not persecution or betrayal. It is deception. That’s Jesus’s warning to them and to us as He says in Mark 13:5, “Watch out that no one deceives you.”

**What Deception Does to Us**

Deception affects the direction our minds are going and our bodies follow. That reminded me about hiking a trail in a wilderness. You can probably imagine that hiking in a beautiful mountain setting can be delightful. Or, it can be downright frustrating when you can’t find your trail because a signpost is misleading, or three trails appear where there’s only supposed to be one. You may take a trail that seems right only to find that you have been deceived.

I think that danger of deception is very real to us today. The further we get into the last days and the more complex society gets, the easier it is to be deceived. In an instant, you can get information from myriads of websites or apps and dozens of channels. How do you know if that information is true or not? How do you know when your mind is being manipulated to believe a deception?

For 20 years, my husband Ron directed a wilderness camping ministry, often including our family. To prepare for a backpacking trip, we’d diligently study the map for the topography and the trails to plan our hike. In a wilderness, there are lots of trails. Among all the trees and valleys, they look alike. If you don’t check your map and compass and can’t see over the next hilltop, you can’t be sure if a certain trail is going to take you where you need to go. To effectively navigate the maze of trails, a hiker must rely on their map and compass. Those are the knowns.

Have you ever considered our Bible to be like a map? It gives us an aerial view that includes the right trail following Jesus as well as all the wrong ones. And, like a compass needle always points
to the north, the Holy Spirit is our compass, always orienting us to Jesus and His way. Without relying on our map and compass, we are vulnerable to being deceived. At least 33 New Testament verses warn believers about being deceived or led astray.

The night before His death, Jesus prays for His disciples to be protected from the evil one, meaning Satan, the deceiver and father of lies. Because this is what deception does to us:

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:3)

Deceiving us is one of Satan’s best means for making us ineffective at pursuing Christ completely. We put all our energy going in the wrong directions. Let’s call those deception trails.

Deception trails are anything that wastes our time, energy and money by sending us in a direction away from our responsibilities as a disciple that Jesus mentioned in Mark 13. These are: 1) knowing Christ and following Him only and 2) being His witnesses as we let Him live His life through us. When we choose to make certain mistakes, we become vulnerable to deception trails.

Let’s all assume the role of a hiker now. What mistakes can cause a hiker to follow a deception trail?

**DECEPTION TRAIL #1: IGNORE THE MAP AND COMPASS AND GO BY HOW YOU FEEL.**

Years ago, our church youth participated in the wilderness activity of orienteering—a sport using a map and compass to navigate between fixed points. In a beautiful Colorado setting, one student was chosen to be group leader. The first task in orienteering is to turn the compass so that the needle lines up with the N on the compass dial. Then, you follow the instructions to go to the right or to the left so many degrees from that heading. Well, the teen ignored the N and lined up the compass needle with the S instead. Though feeling confident in the direction, the student led the whole group 180˚ opposite from where they should have hiked.

What’s the deception? It’s okay to ignore the map and compass, go by how you feel, and still end up where you want to go. Do any of these statements describe you?

- I feel I am not good enough for God to love. Or else He wouldn’t let bad things happen to me.
- I feel like I have to still earn His approval by working harder or being better.
- I feel like some of my sins are not forgivable.
- If it feels right, it must be right.

These statements all deal with emotions. Emotions can distract us because they are responders. They will line up with anything we want them to match, just like the teen’s compass needle lined up with the S instead of the N. Relying on how we feel about something rather than on the Bible and the Holy Spirit to guide us makes us vulnerable to being deceived.

Do you feel like some of your sins are not forgivable? Let’s see what our map says about being forgiven:

“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14)
God forgives us completely when we trust in Jesus Christ. All of our sins were future at that time.

Do you have trouble feeling that God loves you? Let’s see what our map says about God’s love for us:

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation (including ourselves), will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

God’s love is unconditional, that means regardless of our imperfections, because we belong to Him through our faith in Jesus.

Even if you don’t feel forgiven or loved, start with acknowledging the truth because God says it’s true. Write those verses on a card and repeat them to yourself every morning in the mirror.

For example: “God completely loves you, ________________, and you are totally forgiven for all your sins—past, present and future—because of what Jesus did for you. God’s Word says so.”

That’s applying God’s Word by faith to your life.

Or, take any other emotion that seems to be running your life—fear, worry, anger, or impatience. Trust the Holy Spirit to help you find a scripture that teaches truth. Repeat it to yourself, believing it.

Let your emotions respond to God’s Word. They’ll line up eventually since the Holy Spirit, the true compass, lives inside of you guiding you to Bible truth, never opposite of it. So, if you feel you are not forgiven or loved, that’s not the Spirit’s voice. That’s emotions distracting you from relying on your map and compass.

In what areas of your life do you rely on emotions rather than on the Word and the Spirit to guide you? How does that affect your being His witness?

When we rely on emotions, can we be an effective witness? Who else would want to join us in feeling that they aren’t good enough for God to love? That not all of their sins are forgiven? That’s not very good news, is it?

Jesus said, “Watch out that no one deceives you.” That includes ourselves! To avoid an emotional deception trail, rely on the map and compass to pursue Jesus’s trail!

Here’s another deception trail mistake.

**Deception Trail #2: Thinking Great Gear and a Great Body Make for a Great Hike.**

Before going backpacking, I’d walk every day for a few weeks with a partially filled backpack, wearing in my boots, and figuring out how much I could carry—a tent, sleeping bag, clothes, food, and water. You might think that having great gear and a great body will guarantee a great hike. NOT SO! Hikers with very expensive boots still get blisters on the trail. Hikers in perfect physical shape wearing top of the line trail clothes still get altitude sickness.

For a successful hike, you must plan where to set up camp, where to get water, and what to do in the midst of heavy rain, hail and lightning. You need to know where the trails lead and where you want to start and end up. That’s pursuing the important things. Otherwise, you will have a miserable
hike regardless of how good you look because you will be at the mercy of the weather, the wilderness, and other people.

See if you can find the deception in this magazine quote:

> The answer to weight loss, emotional fitness, and life balance is to get selfish...Schedule time for your workout, meals and snacks for the entire year. Include time for massages, manicures, meditation and whatever else pleases your senses and makes you a better or healthier person. Before you know it, you will shed pounds, become fitter and look better than you have in years. You will become healthier and, most of all, you will become happier. (Larry North, “Get Selfish,” Looks magazine, Jan/Feb 2006, pp. 6-7)

What’s the obvious deception? Getting selfish will make us better and happier. If we have better gear (such as a nicer home, newer car, stylish clothes), we will be happier. If we have a better body (slim, wrinkle free, big boobs), we will be happier. Is that true?

Okay, we only have one body, so we should want to take care of it. It’s the biggest ministry tool we have. And, I like nice stuff around me just like you do. But, that desire for great gear creates a stronghold on us.

In today’s lesson, when the calamities come (Mark 13:15-16), Jesus warns disciples not to go back for a cloak or other belongings. Why would they do that? When we invest in stuff, we want to hang on to it, don’t we?

But, will getting selfish with our body and stuff help us follow Jesus only and be His witnesses? Probably not. Will it make us happy? We might get enjoyment, but it’s no guarantee for happiness.

Referring back to the quote above, the more serious deception is that pleasing our physical senses is worth making it a priority in our lives so we will be strong enough to get through life. Is the culture telling us to energetically pursue the lesser things? Come on now. Schedule your meals and snacks for the entire year?!

Think right now of those things that fill your days. What do they reveal about what you consider to be priority in your life?

If we truly believe that knowing Christ and following Him, being His witness in our world, is our priority, it would show in how we spend our time, energy and resources. We have all these things demanding our time or things we want to do. We need to predetermine what will take priority before we’re bombarded with others’ demands. Or, the lesser things will dominate.

We can ask Jesus to help us prioritize our lives. Because we have seen Him do that already in Mark. He knew how to say, “No” to some things, even good things like teaching and healing crowds of people, so He could spend time on the important things—prayer with His Father and building relationships with His disciples.

Ladies, if we are going to be selfish about anything, let’s be selfish about giving ourselves permission to spend time with Jesus in His Word and prayer. I agree with Mr. North (magazine quote above) that we need to plan based on our priorities. How long does it take to eat a snack? 10 minutes? So, why not plan a 10-minute spiritual snack every day for a year? Wouldn’t that be a better plan to pursue?

Take what fills your days and divide it up between what is truly important as a follower of Jesus and what is not. Ask yourself: is frequent time with God and His Word just as necessary to functioning effectively in my life as going to the gym, running errands, and whatever else that could fill your free time? Or, is it optional? Can you give yourself permission to neglect a few things such as doing the dishes or checking email until you get time with God and His Word done?
No matter what age or situation in life, we all have time to do this Bible study lesson each week. It’s hard at first to make yourself do it. But after a while, you find it delightful and hate missing that time. I can testify to that. It’s our time with Jesus in prayer and in the Word that strengthens us to face our turbulent world. Sickness, job loss, storms, fires, and conflicts are all part of life. Having a great body and great stuff does not guarantee endurance through trouble. Denying myself and following Jesus does. Here’s what our map says:

“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.” (Eph. 4:14)

Jesus said, “Watch out that no one deceives you.” That’s anything or anyone claiming to be more important than Him in your life. So, to avoid pursuing the lesser things, rely on the map and compass and pursue the important things in your daily hike following Jesus.

**Deception Trail #3: Assume All Signposts Are Accurate.**

Another mistake we can make while hiking is to assume all signposts are accurate. Jesus warned His disciples twice in Mark 13 about listening to other voices instead of His voice. We’ve just seen one voice calling out to us. What other kinds of tricks is our culture doing to influence our thinking?

And, how does our response affect those around us? Very few of us hike alone. We usually hike as part of a group—whether 2 or 20.

In the Pecos Wilderness, a hiking group reached an intersection of two trails. The signpost had rotted at the bottom and was twisted, but the group didn’t know that. Instead of getting out their map to check, they saw that the sign read “Pecos Falls.” That’s where they wanted to go so they just took off the way the sign pointed. Half an hour later, they realized they were going uphill and not downhill. Falls are at the bottom of a ridge, not at the top. They got out the map and retraced their steps. Heading in the right direction rewarded them with the enchanting sight and sound of cascading water.

But, what if they had continued on that wrong trail? Everyone in the group would have gotten way off course, spending lots of time and energy climbing uphill, and no one would have seen the beautiful falls.

There are some cultural signposts that are misleading, maybe even rotten at the bottom. They keep us from being effective at following Jesus. Here is just one of many—this one particularly aimed at women. See if you can recognize the deception in this quote:

"So now that women don’t need men to reproduce and refinance, the question is, will we keep you around? And the answer is...you know we need you in the way we need ice cream, you’ll be more ornamental..." ("Are Men Necessary?" by Maureen Dowd, quoted on CNN, October 31, 2006)

Those are cultural voices. What messages are they calling out to us? Women are superior to men. Children don’t need fathers because women are sufficient in themselves. Men can’t be trusted because they are imbeciles. We are fed this garbage continually—on TV, in magazines, in books. That is a deception. But I think the greater deception for us is that it really doesn’t affect us as Christian women. Yet, does it? Are we immune to these lures?

I ran across this story, which I think is very telling:
“Several years ago, at a Christian women’s retreat I attended, a discussion about the differences between men and women deteriorated into scathing stories about the inadequacies of men. Over bowls of popcorn and mugs of chocolate, we recklessly devalued most men we knew until a visitor commented, ‘Wow! I was afraid you’d all be into that submission thing! Am I glad to know you’re open-minded. You know, I often wonder if God is a woman. It makes sense if you really think about it. Men are such imbeciles.’” (“Male Bashing: Is it trash talk or harmless humor?” by Ida Rose Hecker, *Today’s Christian Woman*, January/February 1998)

When we listen to other voices besides Jesus’s voice, we can be unconsciously drawn into behavior and thinking that is very ungodlike, something we really don’t want to do. The more we listen to that “deception,” the more accepting of it we are.

We women have laughed at men’s quirks for years. And, vice versa. But now, the culture makes it easier for us to get drawn into ridiculing the men in our lives, to think that we women are the only ones who can be trusted.

I bet you can think of a time within the last year or two, maybe even the last month, when you’ve been drawn into that kind of conversation in a small group.

Let’s follow this deception to its logical conclusion: there is an expansive revival of Goddess worship in our culture—either worshipping some kind of mythological female or worshipping the goddess within us. This kind of thinking appeals to women who are angry with men. And, they look at Biblical Christianity as male-domination. So, they say, “Let’s make God female” and “Let’s rewrite Christianity.” We’re seeing this happen all around us.

Paul warned in 2 Timothy that a time will come …

“… when men (and women) will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

What cultural voices are calling out to you? How do you protect yourself from this kind of deception trail and others like it? Let’s ask Jesus to help us be good doorkeepers of our minds and mouths. Just because books, music and TV shows are labeled “Christian” or “family-oriented” doesn’t mean that they are good for us. I have chosen not to watch certain shows because I don’t like the way men are portrayed and how the women treat the men. I am too impressionable! And, I’ve been a Christian for more than 40 years. I know myself. If I listen to that kind of stuff, it’ll get a foothold in my brain and come out of my mouth. I have to protect myself from that influence. And, I bet you do, too.

Here’s what our map says:

“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.” (Colossians 2:8)

“Do not let any unwholesome talk (foul or abusive) come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” (Ephesians 4:29)

The bottom line is this: don’t let other people’s thoughts be a replacement for the Bible. Always check what people are telling you with the Scriptures. I love what is said about the Bereans:
“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” (Acts 17:11)

They made that a priority and so should we. Jesus said, “Watch out that no one deceives you.”

An important trail rule is for hikers in a group to stay within sight and sound of the leader. It’s the best way to keep from getting lost or left behind. As believers, we need to stay within sight and sound of Jesus’s voice, which are the Bible and the Holy Spirit within us. When we don’t, we make ourselves vulnerable to following a deception trail. So, rely on the map and compass to follow signposts that also rely on the map and compass!

THE REWARDS OF FOLLOWING THE RIGHT TRAIL

About 20 years ago, Ron and I got off the train in the middle of nowhere to hike in the Weminuche Wilderness of southwestern Colorado. Our goal was Chicago Basin where a group of campers was waiting for Ron’s encouragement and guidance after having several very rough days. I went along for the fun. Fun?! The trail climbed 3000 feet in 6 miles following a cascading river. To me it looked like it was straight uphill. It was the hardest hike I had ever experienced. I kept wishing I could turn around, go back to the hotel, sit in a hot tub, and be comfortable. 😊

After several hours of tenaciously sticking to the right trail, following our map and compass, I was greeted with a massive display of wildflowers in a bowl-shaped setting formed by 14,000-foot peaks around it. The beauty was glorious! Though very weary and sore, it was worth staying on the right trail. If you are a hiker, as long as you know you are on the right trail, then steep climbs and slippery descents are not as discouraging. You prepare to face the dangers and challenges for the joy of completing the trail.

We don’t know what’s ahead for us as 21st century Christians. But, we know we can face anything described in Mark 13 if we stay alert and effectively follow Jesus and be His witnesses as He lives His life through us. The effort of the hike will be worth it. Especially when we see Him in His glory.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

What changes do you need to make today to keep you alert to deceptions and to rely on your map and compass so that you can hike Jesus’s trail effectively?
Lesson 10: Facing the Giants

(Mark 14:43-15:47)

Question to consider: Recall the worst 12 hours of your life. What happened? How did you get through it?

Historical Insight: Here is a possible timeline for the day of the crucifixion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 AM</th>
<th>4-6 AM</th>
<th>6-8 AM</th>
<th>9 AM</th>
<th>Noon to 3 PM</th>
<th>3 PM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrest</td>
<td>Trial before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin</td>
<td>Trial before Pilate</td>
<td>Crucified</td>
<td>Darkness over the land</td>
<td>Jesus died</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**DAY ONE STUDY**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 14:43-52.

1. **Discover the Facts:** Jesus was praying and waiting in the garden to be arrested. He knew it would happen; this was not a surprise to God. Jesus did not run away.

   Whom did the Sanhedrin send to arrest Jesus (v. 43)?

   How did the armed crowd identify Him (vv. 44-45)?

   How did you feel when you read that Judas called Jesus “rabbi” and kissed Him?

   What did the disciple standing nearby do to defend Jesus (vv. 46-47)? See John 18:10.

   What is Jesus’s response to the crowd, exposing their deceitfulness (vv. 48-49)?

   What happened to His disciples (v. 50)? But, see v. 54.

   Who else was there as an eyewitness (vv. 51-52)?
Did God need a betrayer for Jesus to get arrested? No. He chose to use Judas’s sinfulness to represent the sin of man in opposition against God. Judas represented evil, the sinfulness of man. And, Judas was part of God’s plan to fulfill the Scriptures in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

**Read Mark 14:53-65.**

2. **Discover the Facts:** The Sanhedrin consisted of 70 members. Not all were present at this “trial.”

   Where was Jesus taken (v. 53)?

   Where is Peter (v. 54)?

   What did the religious leaders want but could not get (vv. 55-56)?

   What was the accusation against Him (vv. 57-59)?

   **Scriptural Insight:** There is no recorded statement from Jesus about this. Perhaps it is a misuse of His words in John 2:18-22. In Acts 7, we read that the Sanhedrin throws a similar accusation at Stephen and stones him for it.

   When asked to respond to the accusation, what did Jesus say (vv. 60-61)?

   When asked if He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One, what did Jesus say (v. 62)?

   What was the High Priest’s response (vv. 63-64)?

   **Focus on the Meaning:** Remember that blasphemy is anything that slanders God’s name or claims God’s majesty and authority. Jesus did not commit blasphemy since He was the Son of God as He said.

   What did the onlookers do (vv. 64-65)?
3. Read v. 62 again. Read Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13-14. Did Jesus claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God?

4. **Heartbreak to Hope**: What in today’s study speaks to your heart?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

**Day Two Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Mark 14:66-72.**

5. **Discover the Facts**: While Jesus was being attacked upstairs, Peter was being attacked in a different way.

   Who came by Peter in the courtyard, and what did she do (vv. 66-67)?

   What did Peter say (v. 68)?

   What did the servant girl do then (v. 69)?

   What is Peter’s response to those who said he had been “with the Nazarene” (v. 70-71)?

   What happened next (v. 72)?
Think About It: As I was preparing this lesson, I realized that Peter wanted to stay close by because he loved Jesus. And, he wanted to just be left alone. It wasn’t his faith that failed him. It was his courage and maybe his hope. Add to that exhaustion. How often does exhaustion, wanting to be left alone, and avoiding conflict get you into trouble?

6. Heartbreak to Hope: God doesn’t entice anyone to sin (James 1:13-14), but He does lead us to a place where we are tested (Job 1; Matthew 4:1; 6:13). His method of instruction is 1) Prepare by instruction (what Jesus had done) and 2) Learn by experience.

Testing reveals to us that we are weak in our humanity regarding even our good intentions. It also shows the terrible possibilities in us because sin is still in us. But, testing teaches us that the safest place to be is in humble dependence upon God (Romans 13:14; 2 Corinthians 1:9). Our prayer should be, “Lord, protect me from myself.”

What have you learned through a time of testing?


7. Discover the Facts: Pilate was a bad dude. He minted coins with pagan images on them. He stole from the temple treasury to build an aqueduct and killed those who protested against that. Pilate represents worldly authority.

What did the Sanhedrin do with Jesus (v. 1)?

Historical Insight: The Sanhedrin apparently reached the decision to accuse Jesus before the civil authority for treason rather than blasphemy. Then He could be executed by the Romans. (NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition, note on Mark 15:1, p. 1527)

Why do you think they bound Him?

What did Pilate ask Jesus (v. 2)?

How did Jesus answer Pilate?

What is Pilate’s next question (v. 4)?

When Jesus refused to answer, what is Pilate’s response (v. 5)?
**Historical Insight:** According to Roman Law, if the accused made no defense, he would be considered guilty and judged as guilty.

Pilate could release Jesus or the murderous rebel in his jail. What did he recognize in the religious leaders (v. 10)?

What did the religious leaders do to get their way (v. 11)?

What response did the crowd give to Pilate’s questions (vv. 12-14)?

What did Pilate do (v. 15)?

**Think About It:** Was Pilate acting as an impartial judge? No. He asked questions for which he didn’t really want answers. His judicial decision was prompted by a desire to satisfy the crowd. Judgment in a Roman court was the sole responsibility of the imperial magistrate. There was no jury of peers. Pilate was a man of the world who rationalized to evade responsibility and the truth. Interestingly, he wanted to wash himself of blame for this judgment, but every doctrinal creed for Christians since this day says, “Suffered under Pontius Pilate.” God didn’t let him be forgotten.

8. **Heartbreak to Hope:** What in today’s study speaks to your heart?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
DAY THREE STUDY

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 15:16-20.

9. **Discover the Facts:** Before this time, Jesus had little interaction with Roman soldiers (who were all non-Jewish) except for those centurions who sought His help in healing someone from their household.

Where did the soldiers take Jesus (v. 16)?

What did they do and say to Him there (vv. 17-19)?

After they finished mocking Jesus, what did they do (v. 20)?

Read Mark 15:21-32.

**Historical Insight:** Crucifixion as a means of execution had been around for at least 100 years. The Phoenicians used it. Even a Jewish king had used it. The Romans popularized it, primarily using it for revolutionaries, criminals, and slaves to deter rebellion. To keep the Jews satisfied, they did not leave crucified Jews on the cross after death though non-Jews were left for days. Roman citizens were never crucified. Jesus was identified with the lowest of society here.

10. **Discover the Facts:** Mark’s account of the crucifixion is the briefest of the four gospels. You can read Matthew 27:33-34; Luke 23:33-43; and John 19:17-24 to find out more information.

Who was drafted to help Him carry the cross beam?

**Scriptural Insight:** Simon was probably a Jew who was in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Alexander and Rufus are only mentioned by Mark, but referred to in such a way as to suggest that they were known by those to whom he wrote. Rufus may be the same person spoken of by Paul in Romans 16:13. (NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition, note on Mark 15:21, p. 1528)

Where did they take Jesus (v. 22)?

What happened there (vv. 23-24)?
**Historical Insight:** It was the accepted right of the executioner’s squad to claim the minor possessions of the victim. Jesus’s clothing probably consisted of an under and an outer garment, a belt, sandals and possibly a head covering. Casting lots was a common practice for them to do this and fulfilled Psalm 22:18. (*NIV Study Bible 1984 Edition*, note on Mark 15:24, p. 1529)

What did the sign above his head say (v. 26)?

Who else was crucified that day (v. 27)?

What did those passing by do (vv. 29-30)?

What did the chief priests and lawyers do and admit about Him (vv. 31-32)?

11. Were the religious leaders sincere in their statement that they would believe if He came down from the cross? How do you know?

12. Read Luke 23:40-43. What do we know about one of those who were crucified with Jesus?

**Think About It:** Sin was very ugly that day. The one who was supposed to represent Jesus before God—the chief priest—did not do that. Those guiltier than Jesus heaped insults on Him. Those who saw Jesus heal many (“save others”) felt no compassion for His unjust execution. But, this was all part of God’s plan. There were no surprises.

13. **Heartbreak to Hope:** What in today’s study speaks to your heart?
Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

DAY FOUR STUDY
Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

Read Mark 15:33-41.

14. Discover the Facts: Jesus spoke 7 times from the cross. Mark only records 1 of them.
   
   What happened between noon and 3 PM (v. 33)?

   Historical Insight: Based on the latest research into historical records, it is generally thought that the Crucifixion took place on Friday, April 3, A.D. 33 and the resurrection on Sunday, April 5. The Crucifixion had to occur in a year when Nisan 14 fell on a Friday. This happened in A.D. 33. Astronomy presents another insight related to the Crucifixion. Just as the sun was setting on April 3 of A.D. 33, there was an eclipse of the moon, giving the moon a dark red color. (Rodger C. Young, Book review: From Abraham to Paul: A Biblical Chronology, by Andrew E. Steinmann, accessed online)

   Read Amos 8:9-10 for the prediction of this event. What are the similarities?

   At 3 PM, what did Jesus cry out (v. 34)?

   Think About It: Why did Jesus quote Psalm 22:1? The words accurately reflect what Jesus felt in His humanity, just as He shrunk back from the cross while in the garden. He identified with people in the horror of sin as the sin of the world was placed on Him. But, He was in the center of God’s will for His life and not really forsaken by God. Perhaps He was pointing those listening to Psalm 22, whose words amazingly describe a crucifixion 1000 years before this happened. It was as if He was saying, “David wrote about me.”
   Although often taught that God turned His back on Jesus that day, there is no verse in the New Testament declaring that. It is a mystery beyond our comprehension regarding what was going on between the Father and the Son at the cross.
What did the bystanders hear and do (vv. 35-36)?

How did Jesus die (v. 37)? See John 19:30.

What happened next (v. 38)? See also Matthew 27:51.

**Historical Insight:** The inner "veil" of the temple is probably in view here, the one separating the holy place from the most holy place. It was a most elaborately woven fabric that was 60 feet high, 30 feet wide, and of the thickness of the palm of the hand. The tearing happened at 3:00 PM, the time of the evening incense offering. A priest would normally have been standing in the holy place offering incense when it tore (cf. Luke 1:8-10). Some early non-biblical Jewish sources also report unusual phenomena in the temple 40 years before its destruction in A.D. 70, one of which is the temple curtain tearing. The fact that this occurred from top to bottom signified that God is the One who ripped the thick curtain. It was not torn from the bottom by men ripping it. *(Dr. Constable’s Notes on Matthew 2017 Edition, p. 471)*

Based on the above information, what does the tearing from top to bottom mean?

What did the Roman centurion notice and declare (v. 39)?

Who else was there watching (vv. 40-41)?

**Think About It:** Many of these women had been caring for His needs for a long time. But, now God is in charge, and they aren’t. They probably felt helpless since they could do nothing for Him. Jesus told them the plan, too. Like the men, they didn’t get it. So, they might have felt hopeless as well.

If you trace the use of the words “follow” and “minister” throughout the Gospel of Mark, you will see how the author used these same words to depict serious disciples. ... The women as depicted by Mark do “whatever disciples may do on behalf of their teachers,” which might include table service, but it may include other forms of self-denying sacrifice, as well.
15. “It is finished” (John 19:30). These final words from Jesus come from an accounting term in Greek meaning, “a debt is paid in full.” What debt was paid in full that day? See Colossians 2:13-14 and other Bible verses you know that answer this question.

**Think About It:** When Jesus said, “It is finished.” God agreed. It is finished. The debt for sin was paid in full. The Old Covenant represented by the veil separating man from God is over. The New Covenant began.

**Read Mark 15:42-47.**

16. **Discover the Facts:** Jesus’s friends couldn’t help during the crucifixion. But, now they can do something to show their love for Him.

What was coming soon that created the urgency to act (v. 42)?

What is known about the one who buried Jesus’s body (v. 43)? See also Matthew 27:57.

What actions did Pilate take in response to Joseph’s request (vv. 44-45)?

What did Joseph do (v. 46)? See who helped him in John 19:39.

What did Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses see (v. 47)?

**Historical Insight:** The Romans confirmed that Jesus was truly dead and had not just swooned or passed out. Two women knew exactly where the body was placed and would not have forgotten that location between Friday and Sunday.

17. **Heartbreak to Hope:** Ugly sin nailed sinless Jesus to a shameful cross in our place. Yet, our God is able to make ugly beautiful. What ugliness in your life has God made beautiful because of your faith in Jesus’s death on the cross for you?
Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.

To see more of what God has made beautiful in your life, read “Christ’s Finished Work on the Cross” on the next page.
Christ’s Finished Work on the Cross

ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE WORLD: IT IS FINISHED!

The gospel is an announcement to the world of an accomplished fact. What God set out to do for mankind, He accomplished. The apostles declared this from the time of Pentecost (Acts 2) and beyond.

Salvation is available on the basis of a single condition: faith (or “belief”). Belief is not just intellectual assent that something might be true. Belief is a commitment of the will. It is the difference between walking alongside a pool of water (seeing it is there) and jumping into the water (experiencing the water personally). God acted; we are to respond to His action by saying yes and jumping into the new life God has for us. Those who respond with faith in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, receive a firm assurance of security (1 John 5:13), a secure new identity in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), and a true knowledge of God as seen through all that He has done through Christ’s finished work on the cross.

Six terms describe how our relationship with God is made new because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—Propitiation, Reconciliation, Redemption, Forgiveness, Justification, and Sanctification. These 6 relationship changes are the direct result of Christ’s finished work on the cross so they are often called “words of the cross.” We will cover them one at a time.

WORD OF THE CROSS #1 PROPITIATION: “GOD’S HOLY WRATH IS FULLY SATISFIED.”

It comes up time and time again. Women who know Christ and have trusted in Him for salvation and new life struggle with the notion that God is still angry with them because of something they’ve done in the past. Maybe that is how you feel.

Do you wonder if you have a flawed understanding of salvation? Is salvation just getting eternal life when you die? From what are Christians saved? When you study the New Testament, you see that we are saved from many things, including ourselves and our own flawed righteousness. But, the main emphasis is that we are saved from the wrath of God.

What does that mean? And, how does understanding that give you confidence that God is no longer angry with you or at you?

What is the wrath of God?

In Colossians, Paul described God’s response to all evil and sin as righteous, holy wrath (Colossians 3:6). We must not project our experience with human anger onto God and assume that “His is the same, only bigger.” God’s wrath is not a mood or a fit of temper. God’s disposition toward sin and evil is as constant and unrelenting as His love and goodness. He hates and rejects evil with a perfect and holy anger. He will never bend or compromise with it. His own nature demands that He judge it through action. To preserve His creation God must destroy whatever would destroy it (Romans 1:18-20). Every wrathful judgment of God in the history of the world has been a holy act of preservation.

God hates sin. It incurs His anger. You can probably recall a time when you incurred the anger of someone you love and needed to make some kind of restitution to “appease” their anger. The act of appeasement leads to that person now being satisfied because restitution has been made, so the relationship can be restored. That is what God did for us. Romans 3:25 says that God presented Christ as a sacrifice of propitiation for our sins. Propitiation is an old word meaning “to appease,
satisfy.” Some translations use the words “sacrifice of atonement” or “atonning sacrifice” instead. The concept of God’s satisfaction is the same.

**God’s wrath is fully satisfied**

God took action. God’s holy wrath against all sin is fully satisfied by Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross. Because of that, God is able to extend mercy to every believer in Christ without compromise with evil. This is truth for you to know and claim.

*Romans 5:9 says this, “Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by His blood, we will be saved through Him from God’s wrath.”*

There is no longer any sacrifice that anyone can ever do to appease God’s wrath against sin apart from what Christ has already done. Picture an empty altar—never again used. Jesus did the appeasement for you. It’s done, finished!

**God is no longer angry at you**

Because you have trusted Christ and are now found in Christ, you can dwell on the FACT that God is no longer angry at your sin—ever! You CAN KNOW and live with confidence that God is SATISFIED…NO LONGER ANGRY at your sin because you believe in His Son.

**Word of the Cross #2 RECONCILIATION: “OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS RESTORED.”**

At some point in our lives, we all experience a personal relationship that is broken. You can probably think of one such conflict right now. Broken relationships cause pain and often leave us confused about how we can possibly fix them.

Most people want to be reconciled so that the relationship can be restored in some fashion. How sad it is when a broken relationship continues to remain broken and isn’t reconciled. What joy we experience when we see a broken relationship repaired and healthy again!

Reconciliation is certainly a reason for rejoicing, especially in our relationship with God! But, what does it take for reconciliation?

**The broken relationship restored**

As Romans 3:23 describes, all people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Before Christ, our problem was a state of alienation (separation) from God because of sin (Isaiah 59:2). There was an impassable barrier between us. A broken relationship. Some kind of reconciliation needed to be done. We couldn’t do it on our part—no matter how many good deeds we did. There was always that chasm created by sin between us and God.

BUT GOD did something about that! I love those two words in the Bible, “But God.” Whenever it looks absolutely hopeless for us humans, God steps in and does the exact thing we need. God restored the broken relationship by reconciling us to Himself through Jesus’s death.

To reconcile means to re-establish friendship between two parties, to settle or resolve a dispute, and/or to bring acceptance. Wow! Did we need that!

What was God’s motivation to repair the broken relationship? It was love.
But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Romans 5:10 says that God loved us so much that even while we were God’s enemies, He did what was needed to reconcile us to Himself through the death of His Son.

For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. (Romans 5:10-11)

Jesus Christ has fully paid mankind’s debt, removing the barrier between God and men. A bridge has been built through Jesus Christ. As we cross over this bridge by our faith in Jesus, our relationship with God is restored. God stands eagerly welcoming anyone who will believe the good news and come home (repent, Luke 15:7-10). And, even more than that, Jesus presents us holy and blameless in God’s sight. Reconciliation is a present reality for every Christian and is worthy of our rejoicing!

Living in the present reality of reconciliation with God

Because this reconciliation extends to everyone who chooses to receive it by faith, God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. We are to announce to others that they can have what we have in a restored relationship with the God who loves them.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

The same power of reconciliation is available to you through Christ for your relationships. If you are in the midst of a relationship that is broken and in need of reconciliation, pray that God would work His mighty hand in the relationship and provide you with His wisdom in pursuing reconciliation.

Restored…no longer broken

You CAN KNOW and live with confidence that the barrier of sin has been taken away and a bridge has been built between you and God because of Jesus’s finished work on the cross. This was God’s act of reconciliation offered to you because you believe in His Son. Your relationship with God is RESTORED…NO LONGER BROKEN.

WORD OF THE CROSS #3 REDEMPTION: “PURCHASED OUT OF BONDAGE TO SIN.”

Bondage. No one likes being in bondage. Whether it is to a person, a contract, a debt, or something controlling your life, bondage stinks. It stifles. It discourages. It makes you a slave of whatever is holding you “in chains.” Every person who is in bondage longs to be released from those chains.

Did you know that every human being born on this planet is born into bondage? I don’t care how much money or status you have. You were born into bondage. Bondage to what? Colossians 1:13 calls it “the kingdom of darkness.” Romans 6:15-18 describes it as being a “slave to sin.” The slave master “sin” calls the shots. Obedience comes too easily. It’s a trap. But, you are released from that trap the moment you trust in Jesus Christ.
The Bible calls this “redemption.” We sing songs about being redeemed. But, do we really understand what that means?

**What is redemption?**

The concept of redemption refers to recovering ownership by paying a stipulated sum. Or, it can mean to set something or someone free from bondage by paying a ransom, such as for a kidnapped person or releasing a slave to become free. Either way, a price is paid.

Biblical redemption is based on an understanding of the pain of slavery—a common practice in the Roman Empire at the time. Nearly 50% of the people were slaves—1 out of every 2 men, women, and children! The readers of the New Testament were very familiar with the hopelessness of being owned by a slave master, the buying and selling associated with the slave market, and the only two ways out of the miserable cycle, one of which was death. The other way was for you to be bought by someone and then set free. Jesus did that for us.

**Jesus Christ set you free.**

Jesus declared that He came not to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). It is through Christ's blood (the purchase price) that we are redeemed. We are redeemed from the slavery of sin and from the empty way of life handed down to us by our forefathers.

Redemption represents an important change in our relationship with God. Before Christ, we were in a state of slavery to sin and to death (spiritual & physical). Biblical redemption means that we have been purchased by the blood of Christ out of slavery and released into freedom to serve God in obedience.

The life of slavery to sin leads to someone offering their bodies to impurity and ever-increasing wickedness, free from the control of righteousness with no benefits, only shame. The end result is death.

The life of freedom leads to someone offering their bodies to God and His righteousness leading to holiness, lavished grace and eternal life. Their life is characterized by hearts under obedience to God.

**Released…no longer in bondage**

God chooses to redeem us. It is an extension of His love and His purpose for us.

- God redeems us to rescue us from the dominion of darkness and bring us into the kingdom of the Son He loves (Colossians 1:13-14) where we have forgiveness of sins.
- God redeems us from all wickedness to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good (Titus 2:13-14).
- God redeems men and women from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Revelation 5:9-10) to be a kingdom and priests to serve Him.

When God redeems you, you become the possession of a loving, merciful God and can live in the security of your freedom from bondage to sin. And, here’s the best part. You have a new master now with greater power living inside of you—the Spirit of God Himself—who can give you freedom from any entrapping sin. Claim that freedom now. Choose to obey the Spirit inside you who will lead you and empower you to say “no” to sin.
Bask in the freedom
You CAN KNOW and live with confidence that you, as a believer, have been purchased by the blood of Christ out of slavery to sin and released into freedom as God’s act of redemption.

Are you experiencing the freedom from slavery to sin in your life right now? If not, do you have confidence that you do not have to listen to the voice of your old slave master sin? You have been RELEASED…NO LONGER IN BONDAGE.

“Redeemed how I love to proclaim it. Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Redeemed through His infinite mercy, His child and forever I am.” (Fannie Crosby, 19th century hymn writer)

WORD OF THE CROSS #4 FORGIVENESS: “YOUR GUILT HAS BEEN TAKEN AWAY.”

Like the woman washing Jesus’s feet with her tears in Luke 7, many of us carry the guilt of our sins with us like a heavy burden, weighing us down. The continual reminder of our sins keeps us from experiencing freedom and from enjoying the relationship with God that we have by faith in Jesus Christ.

We don’t just need a teacher. We need a Savior who comes in and does for us what we can’t do for ourselves: forgiveness.

All of our debt of sin before God is enormous; we are incapable of ever paying it back. You and I need to understand how complete and continual is God’s forgiveness of us. And, we need to know how to deal with any recognized sin in our lives so that we won’t continue to carry that burden of guilt.

What is forgiveness?
In the Bible, the term “forgiveness” means “to send off or send away.” Our sin is transferred to a substitute, Jesus, and taken away. People in Old Testament times were accepted by God and received eternal life in the same way as we are today: by faith in the merciful grace of God. For daily living, however, they had to bring their animal sacrifice to the priest. Their sin was transferred to that sacrifice, and they received forgiveness for their sins up to that point.

God promised His people that one day forgiveness would no longer be a temporary solution, but it would be complete and permanent. That happened on the cross through Jesus.

Jesus Christ set you free from the burden.
As Paul declared in Colossians 2,

“When you were dead in your sins...God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; He has taken it away, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:13-14)

Once you place your faith in Jesus Christ, whatever you have done that was wrong in God’s eyes from the time you were born through the time of your death has been canceled. Taken away. All of it. Past, present and future. Nailed to the cross.

It’s even better than that! Paul writes in 2 Corinthians,
“that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them.” (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Since your sins have been taken away, God is longer counting them against you. You are forgiven based on your faith alone. Sins are applied to Jesus who takes them on your behalf.

**FORGIVENESS: “Your guilt has been transferred to a substitute and taken away.”**

Once you have trusted in Jesus, Ephesians 1:7 says that forgiveness is something we possess as believers. We receive God’s forgiveness for all our sins (past, present, and future) from the moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ. That is very important for you to know. Forgiveness is complete and continual.

Although our God does not hold our sin against us any longer, and His grace is continually forgiving us of sin, that does not give us permission to intentionally sin. Intentional sin does not fit with who you are as a forgiven Christian with a new life to enjoy. But, as long as you live in your earthly body, you will be tempted to sin. Sin will happen—whether intentionally or unintentionally. And, though our God is no longer counting our sins against us, we still must deal with the consequences of any sinful behavior.

As an already forgiven Christian, the biblical process for dealing with recognized sin is to remember first that your identity is child of God, then agree with God that you have sinned against Him, mourn your sin and depend on the Holy Spirit to help you obey God in the future. Then, trust in Him to help you overcome the consequences of any sinful choices you have made in a way that brings glory to Him.

**Forgiven…no longer burdened**

Dwell on the FACT that Jesus will cleanse your conscience from guilt. Will you take Him at His word? If there is any past sin for which you are still feeling guilty, claim God’s complete forgiveness today. Now, choose to believe you are FORGIVEN…NO LONGER BURDENED by your sin. Allow Jesus to cleanse your conscience from any residual guilt. Every time you think about it again, thank God for His amazing gift!

**WORD OF THE CROSS #5 JUSTIFICATION: “DECLARED RIGHTEOUS IN GOD’S EYES.”**

As a teen, I wrestled with the notion that I was not good enough to please God. I could never measure up to His standards of perfection. I was always guilty of not doing something right, of falling short of whatever it was He expected of me.

Then, I heard some good news when I committed my life to Christ and chose to follow Him. God declared me “not guilty” of all my sin. Not guilty? All my sin? Really?

Yes, dear believer, God declares you “not guilty” of all sin, once and for all, based on your faith alone in His Son. It is an amazing plan that is totally based on His grace towards you, not anything you have earned by your own efforts.

And, this one decision made by God the Judge on behalf of every Christian is one of the most important aspects of our relationship with God. The word used to describe it is this: **Justification**. And, the truth wrapped up in this one word has rocked the world for centuries.
**What is justification?**

Justification is a legal term that literally means, “to declare righteous, to declare not guilty.” English New Testaments use “justified” and “made righteous” interchangeably, but both mean just about the same thing. Justification represents an important change in our relationship with God. Our problem before Christ was our need for perfect acceptability before a holy God. We could never reach that on our own.

Justification is God's act as Judge where He declares a guilty sinner to be totally righteous in His sight on the basis of Christ's finished work on the cross and that person's faith in Christ. This is possible because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ fully honored and satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God (“propitiation”).

Justification involves both a negative and positive aspect. Negatively, justification is the removal of guilt from the offender (“forgiveness”). Positively, justification is the addition of righteousness to the one who believes (Romans 5:17). This is called the “Great Exchange.” Paul describes it clearly in 2 Corinthians,

> God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

**Jesus Christ took your sin; God declares you righteous.**

God not only declares you “not guilty” of all sin through your faith in His Son, He also gives you a new status called “righteousness before God.” That’s the end result of JUSTIFICATION: "The believer in Jesus Christ is declared righteous before God."

It is not your own righteousness that does it. You receive this righteous status by faith alone and not depending upon any works that you do to earn acceptability in God's sight, even after you are saved. When God looks on you, He sees His Son’s righteousness taking the place of your sin—even your sin after you’ve been a believer for a long time.

Picture an accountant’s spreadsheet dedicated to your life. On the left side of the page is the heading “your sins;” on the right side of the page is the heading “Christ’s righteousness.” When you sin (intentionally or unintentionally) for the rest of your life, God replaces that sin on the “your sins” side with Christ’s righteousness and puts your sin on His side—your sin is taken away (forgiveness). It is a continual balancing. Your sin never stays on your side of the page because God declares in 2 Corinthians 5:19 that He is “not counting men’s sins against them.” You are forever declared “not guilty” in His sight. Isn’t that great news?!

**But, wait, there’s more…**

According to Romans 5:1-2, we now have peace with God as a benefit of being justified. We are no longer enemies but are reconciled to Him as saved ones. We are no longer alienated from God as enemies in our minds because of our evil behavior. Instead, we are now presented as “holy in His sight,” without blemish and free from accusation.

In Galatians 3:26-27, Paul declares that every believer is a child of God by faith and, therefore, clothed with Christ. When God looks on you and me, He sees Jesus and His righteousness, not all of our faults. It is an amazing plan that is totally based on His grace toward us, not anything we have earned by our own efforts.

**Righteous…no longer guilty**

If you are still wrestling with the notion that you are not good enough to please God, remember that no one can ever be good enough on his or her own merits to please God.
In Philippians 3:2-9, Paul considered his birth status, education, pursuit of knowledge, and zeal to get rid of Christians as evidence that he had plenty of reasons to convince himself that he was a "righteous" Jew and that God should have been pleased with his efforts.

But, after knowing Christ, Paul declared all those things that he once thought were in his favor to be rubbish, a loss rather than a win when it comes to faith. Instead, Paul discovered that knowing Jesus Christ as Lord was far better. He now preferred to be found in Christ with the righteousness that comes through faith, not by his own efforts. All Paul had to do to gain his new righteous standing before God was to trust in Jesus Christ as His Savior and Lord. That is true for you as well.

Dwell on the FACT of your justification—being declared righteous so that you are now perfectly acceptable to a holy God based on your faith in His Son. How do you feel about this? When you are tempted to think that God could not possibly accept you because of your weaknesses and guilty past, declare this to yourself: “I am declared righteous in God's eyes because of my faith in Jesus Christ.” You are RIGHTEOUS…NO LONGER GUILTY in God’s sight.

WORD OF THE CROSS #6 SANCTIFICATION: “SET APART AS GOD'S POSSESSION FOR HIS EXCLUSIVE USE.”

I was once an up-tight perfectionist. Yes, I admit it. My whole self-image depended upon being perfect in grades, piano performance and whatever got me awards for achievement.

Yet, my flaws kept getting in the way of getting straight A’s one six weeks so that I missed out on the “straight A’s” award for that school year. I was horrible in athletics so PE was my nemesis. Then, in college, physics knocked me down big time. I just couldn’t see how to get the answers to those problems.

My flaws were ever before me, and I sobbed when I couldn’t achieve perfection, which happened a lot. My self-image was tied to a losing cause.

Then, Jesus entered my life and showed me a new way to look at myself—through what He did for me on the cross. When my eyes stopped looking at me and my flaws and started looking at Him and my value in His sight, that burden of performance and perfectionism just rolled off my shoulders. It was the greatest relief I ever felt!

And, perfectionism has never controlled my life since then (although that tendency to evaluate myself and what I do with critical eyes remains latent in my personality). Through my faith in Christ, God looks upon me as already perfect, as flawless as the most perfect diamond. The Bible calls this Sanctification.

What is sanctification?

Like propitiation (word #1), sanctification is a word we don’t use in our daily vocabulary. To be sanctified means to be made holy. To be “holy” means to be “set apart for special use.” Because the two words—sanctified and holy—are so closely connected, they are used interchangeably in our English translations. They mean the same thing, though.

Sanctification represents another important change in our standing with God. Our problem before Christ was our need to be separated from the world and separated to God. This is accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as all believers are turned from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17-18).

God demands that we be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). But, here’s the best news: God makes us holy in His sight by our faith in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10:10). His love chooses to do that for
us. It absolutely amazes me that God looks upon me and calls me holy in His sight. Doesn’t that amaze you?

But, sanctification is more than just having a different status before God. We have a different purpose as well. Every believer has been set apart as God’s special, beloved possession for His exclusive use. To be set apart for special use is similar to using fine china and silverware for special occasions. It is the opposite of ordinary and common. Dear Christian, you are God’s special, beloved possession—called by Him to be dedicated to His service. You have a valuable purpose. How sweet is that!

**You place your faith in Jesus; God declares you His saint.**

Sanctified ones are called “holy people” and “saints” in the New Testament, depending on the translation. You can see how Paul described the believers in the first couple of verses of most of his letters—i.e., Romans 1:7, 2 Corinthians 1:1, and Ephesians 1:1. Translators use various English words to represent Paul’s intended meaning, usually “saints,” “holy ones” or “holy people.” All of those are translating a derivative of the Greek word *hagios*, “holy,” meaning separated from sin and dedicated to God.

All believers are called “holy ones” based on their faith in Jesus Christ. You as a saint are identified by position, what God declares to be true about you. Every believer, including you, is one of God’s saints, totally loved and accepted by Him. You are considered a saint of God by His declaration, not because of your behavior. Although some particularly influential Christians have been titled “Saint” through the years as an honor for their service to God, this in no way negates the truth that **every believer is a saint in God’s eyes.**

Believers are made holy by Christ’s death on the cross in their relational status before God. Remember all those words we have already studied? You have been redeemed, reconciled to God, forgiven, justified and completely accepted by God because of what Jesus has already done for you on the cross. All of that contributes to God declaring you **holy** as one of His saints by faith in Jesus Christ. That is your status before God. **Perfected…no longer flawed** in His sight.

**But, wait, there’s more…**

Believers are also “being made holy” in their thoughts, words, and actions by the work of the Holy Spirit. This is ongoing from the moment of salvation until the Lord comes or the believer dies, when our “being made holy” is complete (Philippians 1:6). The goal of the Spirit’s work is to transform us into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18) so that we become in thought and behavior what we are in status—holy as God is holy.

**Perfected…no longer flawed**

An understanding of Christ’s finished work on the cross is the basis for a firm knowledge of your identity in Him—a foundational truth for successful Christian living. It was totally **God’s work** to make you acceptable again in His sight. Your proper response is to **trust** and **rest in His work** and to continually offer Him thanks from a grateful heart along with your willing service.

Dwell on the FACT that God declares you holy because of your faith in Christ. **You are set apart by Him, for Him.** This is your status before God because of your faith. Your behavior matches your position when you submit to the Spirit’s work to intentionally separate you from what God calls sin and then commit yourself to being used for His purposes throughout a typical day as you care for your household, be a parent or grandparent to children, work for an employer, interact with people around you, and spend your leisure time.
**These Gifts Are Yours, Sister!**

Because of the cross, you can dwell on the FACT that God was fully satisfied by Jesus’s finished work on the cross. God is no longer angry at your sin because you believe in His Son. You can dwell on the FACT that the barrier of sin has been taken away and complete reconciliation between you and God is possible because of Jesus’s finished work on the cross. Your relationship with God is restored. You can dwell on the FACT that you, as a believer, have been purchased by the blood of Christ out of slavery and released into freedom as God’s act of redemption. You have a new master with greater power living inside of you, the Spirit of God Himself, who can give you freedom from any entrapping sin.

You can also dwell on the FACT that you are completely forgiven of your sins and that Jesus promises to cleanse your conscience from guilt. You can dwell on the FACT that you have been declared righteous (justified) and are now perfectly acceptable to a holy God based on your faith in His Son. And, you can dwell on the FACT that God declares you holy because of your faith in Christ. You are sanctified—set apart by Him, for Him.

Mankind’s disease was sin. Because of this disease, we were: 1) never able to make ourselves well, 2) in bondage to the disease, 3) alienated from the one who could heal us, 4) carrying the guilt of having the disease, 5) experiencing cumulative effects of the disease, and 6) unable to live a purposeful life. Jesus’s finished work on the cross removed all these effects of the disease so that “by His wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24)—truly healed!

An understanding of Christ’s finished work on the cross is the basis for a firm knowledge of our identity in Him—a foundational truth for successful Christian living. It was totally God’s work to make sinners acceptable again in His sight. Our proper response is to trust and rest in His work, and to continually offer Him thanks from grateful hearts along with our willing service.

Now that you have a more complete understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ’s finished work on the cross on your behalf—how does that make you feel? Believe it, sister. Embrace it. Relish in it. Bask in it. Anchor your hope in it.

As Paul writes in Colossians 3:12, you are dearly loved!

**Reflect and Respond**
Lesson 11: He Is Alive! Hope Springs New


Day One Study

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.


1. **Discover the Facts:** The religious leaders weren’t satisfied with just having Jesus crucified.
   
   On Saturday, while Jesus was dead in the tomb, what did the religious leaders ask Pilate to do (vv. 62-64)?

   What happened then (vv. 65-66)?

   **Focus on the Meaning:** Jesus's first "deception" from their viewpoint was His messiahship, and His "last" (second) was His claim that He would rise from the dead. The falsely pious chief priests and Pharisees pretended to want to protect the people from deception. Matthew viewed their action as self-deception designed to deceive others ("blind leading the blind"). ... they were the real deceivers of the people. (Dr. Constable's Notes on Matthew 2017 Edition, p. 477)

Read Mark 16:1-8.

2. **Discover the Facts:** Now, we get to look at the greatest miracle in human history.

   What did the 3 women do after sunset on Saturday (v. 1)?

   What were they not expecting to happen?

   What was their concern as they headed to the tomb early Sunday morning (vv. 2-3)?

   When they got there, what did they see (v. 4)?

   As they entered the tomb, what did they see (v. 5)?
What did they not see?

What was their response?

What did the young man (Matthew and John identify him as an angel) tell them not to do?

After confirming their intent to find Jesus, what did he say to them?

What instruction did the angel give to the women (v. 7)?

According to Luke 24:6-8, what did they remember?

What was Jesus’s plan for meeting with His followers?

How did the women feel then (v. 8)?

What did they do even though feeling that way?

**Scriptural Insight:** Verses 9-20 are not original to Mark. The earliest and best manuscripts do not have them. Most scholars believe they were added later. The word choice and writing style are different from Mark’s style. We don’t have any record of Jesus giving His disciples authority to pick up snakes or drink poison. Everything else is a summary of what is found in the other gospels. So, either Mark ended his book at v. 8 or the rest of it was lost. Because of word choices in v. 8, many scholars think that Mark wrote more and did not intend to end at v. 8.

3. **Heartbreak to Hope:** What in today’s study speaks to your heart?
**Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.**

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**DAY TWO STUDY**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read Matthew 28:1-10.**

4. **Discover the Facts**: We will learn a few more details from Matthew’s account of Resurrection Sunday.

   According to v. 2, what had just happened?

   **Focus on the Meaning**: Only Matthew mentions the earthquakes that happened at Jesus’s death and at His resurrection. These were significant signs for the Jews. Matthew wrote his gospel primarily for those who were Jewish.

   What was the angel’s appearance like (v. 3)?

   How did the guards respond to this event (v. 4)?

   **Scriptural Insight**: All of these events have supernatural connotations. An angel had announced the Incarnation, and now an angel announced the Resurrection (1:20-23; cf. 18:10). The angel rolled the stone away to admit the witnesses, not to allow Jesus to escape (cf. John 20:26). The guards experienced the earthquake and observed the angel, who appeared as a young man (Mark 16:5). It was seeing the angel—whose appearance was also "like lightning," which evidently terrified them so greatly—that Matthew could describe them as appearing "like dead men" (vv. 3-4). Perhaps they fainted "dead away," as in a deep sleep or coma. (*Dr. Constable’s Notes on Matthew 2017 Edition*, p. 478)

   What is added in v. 8 to what Mark wrote about the women leaving the tomb?

   Who met them on the way, and what did He say to them (v. 9)?
What did the women do?

What did Jesus tell them not to do (v. 10)?

What were they to do?

What new relationship does Jesus now have with the disciples?

Read Matthew 28:11-15.

5. **Discover the Facts**: The guards reported what had happened to the chief priests. The religious leaders had to come up with a “Plan B.”

   What deceptive plan did the chief priests and elders make (vv. 12-15)?

   Did it work?

6. **Heartbreak to Hope**: What in today’s study speaks to your heart?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*
**Day Three Study**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.

**Read John 20:1-18.**

7. *Discover the Facts:* John gives more detail about Jesus’s interaction with one particular woman, Mary Magdalene (v. 1), but we know from the other gospels that at least 3 other women were with her when they went to the tomb.

What did Mary Magdalene tell Peter and John (v. 2)?

What do Peter and John do and see for themselves (vv. 3-9)?

What did they not understand?

After the disciples left, what is said about Mary Magdalene (vv. 10-11)?

When she saw the angels, what was her concern (vv. 12-13)?

When she sees Jesus but doesn’t recognize Him, what was still her concern (vv. 14-15)?

What does this tell you about her?

When she recognizes Jesus calling her name, what does she say and do (vv. 16-17)?

What does Jesus tell her to do (v. 17)?

Mary obeys. What news does she give (v. 18)?
Read John 20:19-31.
8. **Discover the Facts**: Jesus shows Himself to His disciples.
   
   When did this occur (v. 19)?

   Where were the disciples and why?

   What did Jesus say and do?

   Then what did Jesus do (v. 20)? See also Luke 24:36-43.

   How did the disciples respond?

   What did Jesus reconfirm to them in v. 21?

   Whom did He temporarily give to them (v. 22)?

   Who missed Jesus’s appearance (v. 24)?

   What was Thomas’s response when the others told him about seeing Jesus (v. 25)?

   What happened a week later (vv. 26-27)?

   What is Thomas’s response now (v. 28)?

   What is Jesus’s response to Thomas that also applies to us (v. 29)?

   Write John 20:31 in the space below. This fits with Jesus’s words in v. 29.
9. **Heartbreak to Hope**: Reflecting on John 20:29 (those of us who have not seen and yet believe). What drew you to believe in Jesus? When? Where? Who?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this lesson.*

**DAY FOUR STUDY**

Ask the Lord Jesus to speak to you through His Word. Tell Him that you are listening.


10. **Discover the Facts**: Two men get a great sermon!

As two men were walking the 7 miles from Jerusalem to Emmaus, what happened (vv. 13-16)?

What did Jesus ask them (v. 17)?

Who did they think Jesus was before He was crucified (v. 19)?

What news did they receive (vv. 22-24)?

How did Jesus respond to this (vv. 25-27)?

What happened next (vv. 28-31)?
What did they say to each other (v. 32)?

Then, what did they do (vv. 33-35)?

Read Matthew 28:16-20.

11. Discover the Facts: Jesus’s commission to all His followers.
   Where were they now?

   What was given to Jesus?

   What commission does Jesus give to those under His authority?

   What does He promise to His followers who are being commissioned?

Scriptural Insight: Jesus’s Resurrection Appearances
That Morning—The women (Mark 16:1-8; Matthew 28:1-10; John 20:1-18)
That Afternoon—Peter and the two men walking to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)
One week later—The disciples plus Thomas (John 20:26-31)
In Galilee—7 disciples (John 21); to 500 at once and His brother James (1 Corinthians 15:1-7); and gives the Great Commission to all His followers (Matthew 28:16-20)

Read “The Resurrection of Jesus—What Does It Really Mean?” at the end of this lesson for additional insight.

12. Heartbreak to Hope: What in today’s study speaks to your heart?
13. **Heartbreak to Hope**: Reflect back on this whole lesson, seeing how people experiencing heartbreak, pain, or uncertainty found hope, healing and love. Which ones will you remember the most?

*Write a prayer to God in response to what He has shown you in this study of Mark.*
The Resurrection of Jesus—What Does It Really Mean?

Does it bother you when you watch a new movie about Jesus’s life (or, even an old one) and the movie just falls flat when it comes to the resurrection appearances of Jesus? Sometimes, they are skipped altogether. Other times they are portrayed as some kind of “voice heard only” type of thing. With all the phenomenal capability of Hollywood special effects, it seems that filmmakers could do (and would want to do) a fantastic job of portraying Jesus in His resurrected body and His real interactions with all those 500+ real people (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) who saw Him over a period of 40 days.

The Resurrection Is the Greatest Event in Human History

This culture is wild about the supernatural, sci-fi and fantasy fiction. Yet, the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest real supernatural event in human history. God raised His Son from the dead and gave Him a new physical body that would never die again. Jesus’s new body was different from His friend Lazarus (John 11:38-44) who would experience death once again.

So, why do we as a culture have difficulty believing that Jesus’s dead body was resurrected into an immortal but completely physical body that walked, talked, ate, drank, and could be touched as any human body could do? I think it is because we don’t really understand the true meaning of the resurrection and why Jesus had to rise from the dead.

Do you know why Jesus had to rise from the dead? Wasn’t the cross enough? Why is the physical bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ essential to our faith? Couldn’t it have been some spiritual thing instead?

After 2000 years of Christians celebrating this human-history-changing event at Easter, many do not know the answer to these questions—perhaps because so much of our teaching centers on the cross and our sin problem. That’s only half the story, though. Understanding the true meaning of the resurrection gives us a proper view towards being human, towards life after death, and even towards both our present and future purpose on this earth.

Several years ago, I read The Resurrection of the Son of God by N.T. Wright, an insightful book that helped me to understand what the resurrection meant to those living 2000 years ago and for us today. I first learned what the resurrection did not mean.

What the Resurrection Does Not Mean

1) The resurrection was not meant to prove life after death. Nearly everyone in the Roman world of Jesus’s day believed in some form of post-death existence—the soul living on after the body died.

2) The resurrection was not the appearance of Jesus’s spirit or ghost. Even though the gospels clearly say this, people persist in viewing the event as somehow ghostly rather than physical. The term “resurrection” in that day and time meant receiving a new physical body after a time of death, never a way of talking about a ghost or spirit. That’s why it was so offensive to the Greek-influenced mind. To them, the body was evil so why would anyone ever want a new body?

3) The resurrection does not directly prove that Jesus is God. The Jews expected the resurrection of all the righteous before the kingdom was established; that wouldn’t prove that they were God. Jesus did not become the “Son of God” at the resurrection. But, the resurrection declared that what He did in His life and in His death was the work of God’s Son (Romans 1:4).
Eliminating those ideas leads us to what the resurrection of Jesus does mean.

**WHAT THE RESURRECTION DOES MEAN**

1) The resurrection **announced the beginning of the kingdom** (Daniel 12:2-3; Isaiah 26:19; John 5:28-29). The Jews just didn’t know that it would be a two-stage process—first, the Messiah resurrected, then later everyone else.

2) The resurrection is **God’s solution to man’s state of spiritual death**. Human beings had two problems. The first problem—a sickness called sin, which caused the second problem—death, physical death and spiritual separation from God.

   Jesus’s death on the cross was God’s solution to the sickness—sin. Jesus had to physically die because physical death was the penalty for sin (Romans 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-23). The resurrection declares that the debt for sin has been paid and accepted (Col 2:13-14). The sickness has a cure. What about the death problem?

   God’s solution to our spiritual death is to restore life to us. That’s called regeneration. Believers receive life. We are cleansed and made new creations when God plants His Spirit within us. Jesus completely identified with us in our humanity, our sin and our death, so that we could be totally identified with Him in His resurrected humanity, His righteousness and His life.

The empty tomb and the appearances of Jesus together are powerful evidences of the fact. When the early Christians spoke of Jesus being raised from the dead, they were claiming that something happened to Jesus which had happened to no one else—ever!

**JESUS’S RESURRECTION BODY**

Jesus’s resurrection body was the same in many ways as His “before death” body but different in other ways. One writer called it “transphysical,” meaning transformed physicality. Since we get a similar body, let’s look at this more closely.

**What was the same?**

- He looked like a normal human being (not glowing), not a spotted owl or whale or alien life form.
- He talked, walked and preached a sermon at the same time, and had memory.
- He invited His followers to touch Him and see that He was real, referred to Himself as having flesh and blood, and used His hands to break bread. And, He cooked and ate broiled fish.
- He could be grasped or touched (John 20:17; Matt.28:9).
- His voice was the same. He spoke the same language. He was just as compassionate as He had been.

**What was different?**

- Sometimes it was hard to recognize Him. Perhaps His new body was created to appear the ideal age for a man—whatever that might have been for Adam. The perfect 25-year-old! That would have changed His looks considering He died as a 30-something. The scars on His hands, side and feet were obvious means of identification.
- Jesus could appear and disappear at will. His body passed through grave clothes, a rocky tomb, and walls where the disciples were meeting behind locked doors. It’s as though there
is another dimension we don’t see that exists alongside the one we do see. That would explain several things in the Bible.

- His body was physically robust. After all, He walked and preached a sermon for a good part of the 7 miles to Emmaus two days after He was severely beaten and crucified!

Jesus ascended to heaven in His new physical body to reign from heaven as God-man until He returns (Acts 1:9-11).

**JESUS’S RESURRECTION AND LIFE IN THE “UNTIL” TIME**

Understanding the true meaning of the resurrection gives us a proper view towards life now (until He returns, or we go to heaven before then).

**We get a proper view about being human.**

When God made a new body for Jesus, He didn’t choose a spotted owl or a whale or some alien life form. He created another human body. That tells me something about being human. The pagan view was that the body is evil, and the soul is good. But God’s view is that the problem was not the body itself, which He had purposefully designed, but sin and death which had taken up residence in it. Being an embodied human is good. What is bad is being a rebellious, decaying human, because of sin and death.

How do you view the body God gave you? You are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14-16).

**We get a proper view about facing death.**

You can be confident that when you as a believer die, you go immediately to be with Jesus. And, you can enjoy all the blessings of being there. We have the hope of reunion with loved ones and receiving a new physical body with a wonderful new life to enjoy forever.

**We get a proper view about having a purpose on this earth.**

God has given us new life here by design. He didn’t take us to heaven right away. We have a purpose here. We are here by God’s design to follow Jesus as His disciples and to live for Him as disciple-makers—intentionally sharing our faith with others, leading them to Christ, and helping them grow in their faith so they can reach their peers for Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). We do that through His power in us—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.

**THE RESURRECTION IS HOPE**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest miracle in human history. Life-changing. Life-giving. And, this same Jesus is in His physical human body in heaven waiting for us to join Him some day. We will experience life in a new physical body that far exceeds anything we have ever known here. That’s HOPE!

**REFLECT AND RESPOND**
# The Miracles of Jesus in Mark

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2. *Dr. Constable’s Notes on Mark 2017 Edition*
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12. Tim Stevenson, *First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians*
13. “What does Messiah mean?” accessed at gotquestions.org