



SERMONS AND STUDIES

FEB–APR 2018

# WHAT'S COMING UP?

## Weekly

Mondays, 1-2pm: Weekly Church Prayer Meeting

Wednesdays, 9.30-11.30am (term time): St Matt's Playgroup

Thursdays, 9.30-11.30am (term time): Women on Thursdays Bible Study

Thursdays, 3.30-4pm (term time): Year 7 Quiet Time

Fridays, 4:30-6pm (term time): FISH

Fridays, 7-9pm (term time): Youth Group

4 Feb		Gospel of Mark sermon series begins
		Teachers Commissioning
6 Feb	11.30am	Midweek service
	6:30pm	Simply Christianity Course begins (five weeks)
10 Feb	8am	Men's Breakfast (Men & Politics)
	10a-3pm	National Day of Prayer
	4:30pm	Ladies Film Night (Case for Christ)
11 Feb		Life Group Leaders Commissioning
12 Feb	6pm	Parish Council
13 Feb	6:30pm	Prayers for Healing Service
16 Feb	7:30pm	Coffee & Dessert Night (welcome)
16-17 Feb		CMS Canberra Mission Focus
18 Feb		Workers Commissioning
	Noon	Connect lunch
19 Feb	6:30pm	Special Parish Meeting – Synod elections
20 Feb	11.30am	Midweek service
26 Feb	7:30pm	Monthly Parish Prayer Meeting
4 Mar		Students Commissioning
	Noon	Connect Lunch
4-11 Mar		CMS Prayer Focus

6 Mar	11:30am	Midweek Service
13 Mar	6:30pm	Prayers for Healing Service
17 Mar	8am	Men's Breakfast
19 Mar	6pm	Parish Council
	7:30pm	CMS Prayer Evening
20 Mar	11:30am	Midweek Service
24 Mar	2pm	St Matt's AGM
29 Mar	7:30pm	Monthly Parish Prayer Meeting
30 Mar		Good Friday
3 Apr	11:30am	Midweek Service
7 Apr		BIG-DAY-IN with Mike Raiter
8 Apr		Peacemaking sermon series begins
9 Apr	6pm	Parish Council
10 Apr	6:30pm	Prayers for Healing Service
13-15 Apr		KYCK Conference
17 Apr	11:30am	Midweek Service
23-27 Apr		St Matt's Kids Club
26 Apr	7:30pm	Monthly Parish Prayer Meeting
29 Apr		Mother's Day Card sale for African Enterprise

**Note:** The Life Group studies in this booklet were predominantly written by Steve Nation, with some questions used under copyright permission from the following resources: How People Change by Tim Lane & Paul Tripp; & The Gospel of Mark, studies by Gospel in Life, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York.

# Faith basics #2 – People of the Word

## Why Read the Bible?

There is hardly a chapter in the New Testament that does not bear witness in some way to this basic thought: that all of our experience as a Christian is to be shaped by the reality of the word of God.

- Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matt 4:4)
- Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)
- Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. (Col 3:16)
- And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe. (1 Thess 2:13)
- For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Heb 4:2, 11-12)
- But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. (1 Jn 2:5a)
- I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. (Rev 3:8)

## With what mindset should we read the Bible?

Here is an edited summary from a letter by John Newton to a Christian friend (entitled “The Blessedness of the Believer”). John Newton is the author of the hymn “Amazing Grace”. Here’s how he encourages us to approach the Bible:

We can’t read the Scripture like an attorney reads a will – merely to know the sense of it, and catch its argument. We need to read the Scriptures like an heir – to hear the voice of a loved one describing our inheritance. This means we must read with anticipation – to know the One who loves us so much, that He died for us, to give us an inheritance that will never spoil or fade (1 Peter 1:3-9).

We don’t read the Bible for fun and giggles, or listen to a preacher to simply critique them. We listen to hear the Word of God, to behold His glorious character, to sense His goodness, to renew our strength, to be conformed more and more into the image of Jesus.

And we read it to be instructed by our Maker and Master and be filled with heavenly wisdom, and thereby qualified to judge, speak, and act in Christ-like character, in all the relations and occasions of life.

## How to read the Bible (one method)<sup>1</sup>

Step 1: Relax. Sit down and focus on what you’re doing.

Step 2: Pray. Ask God to help you to understand His Word and ask the Spirit to help you to respond in obedience and faith to what you learn.

Step 3: Read the Bible passage.

Step 4: Think about what it means: what’s the flow of thought? What’s the main idea, encouragement, challenge etc? What does it tell you about Jesus and living with Him as Lord?

Step 5: (if you are so inclined) Record. Write notes about what you learned and how it applies to you.

Step 6: Take one thought, verse or idea from the passage – and think about it for the rest of the day (or until the next Bible reading session occurs). Try to live out the implications of that thought / verse.

Step 7: Praise and prayer. Give thanks to God for what you learnt, confess your struggle in the issue learnt (if you struggle in this issue), and ask for help to trust in Jesus and follow Him as Lord in this area.

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Gordon Cheng, *Six Steps to Encouragement*, Matthias Media

The above steps aren't to put a straight-jacket on your Bible reading. They shouldn't be seen as laws – because God hasn't told us exactly how much we should read each day, when we should read it or rules for how one must do their daily time with God. But the above steps are there to help us get the most out of our reading.

### **Reading the Bible with someone else - some suggestions**

Before the meeting (15 mins)

1. Take 15 mins to pray and to read the set passage
2. Write down up to five insights from the passage that you personally find helpful or challenging
3. Note down any questions or things you're not sure of

The meeting itself (30 mins)

1. Share with your friend the insights and questions you've each written down
2. At the end of the session, write down one thing you're going to do in response to this study
3. Pray together about what you've learned and how it applies

Here's a break-up of the Letter to the Colossians, take one section each meeting.

1. 1:1-14
2. 1:15-23
3. 1:24 – 2:6
4. 2:6-19
5. 2:20 – 3:17
6. 3:18 – 4:1
7. 4:2-18

## Suggestions for getting the most out of Life Groups<sup>2</sup>

1. Come to the study prepared. You will find that careful preparation will greatly enrich your time spent in group discussion.
2. Be willing to participate in the discussion. The leader of your group will not be lecturing. Instead, he or she will be encouraging the members of the group to discuss what they have learned. The leader will be asking the questions that are found in this study.
3. Stick to the topic being discussed. Your answers should be based on the verses which are the focus of the discussion and not on outside authorities such as commentaries or speakers. These studies focus on a particular passage of Scripture. Only rarely should you refer to other portions of the Bible. This allows for everyone to participate in in-depth study on equal ground.
4. Be sensitive to the other members of the group. Listen attentively when they describe what they have learned. You may be surprised by their insights! Each question assumes a variety of answers. Many questions do not have “right” answers, particularly questions that aim at meaning or application. Instead the questions push us to explore the passage more thoroughly. When possible, link what you say to the comments of others. Also, be affirming whenever you can. This will encourage some of the more hesitant members of the group to participate.
5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. We are sometimes so eager to express our thoughts that we leave too little opportunity for others to respond. By all means participate! But allow others to also.
6. Expect God to teach you through the passage being discussed and through the other members of the group. Pray that you will have an enjoyable and profitable time together, but also that as a result of the study you will find ways that you can take action individually and/or as a group.
7. Remember that anything said in the group is considered confidential and should not be discussed outside the group unless specific permission is given to do so.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Getting the Most Out of 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, IVP LifeGuides

# Mark's Gospel: an overview

Feb 4	Mark 1:1-20
Feb 11	Mark 2:1-3:6
Feb 18	Mark 4
Feb 25	Mark 4-5
Mar 4	Mark 8
Mar 11	Mark 10:13-52
Mar 18	Mark 11:1-33
Mar 25	Mark 14:1-42
Mar 30	Mark 15:1-39
Apr 1	Mar 15:40-16:8

## Author, Date, and Recipients<sup>3</sup>

The apostle Peter passed on reports of the words and deeds of Jesus to his attendant, John Mark, who wrote this Gospel for the wider church as the record of Peter's apostolic testimony. The book was likely written from Rome during the mid- to late-50s a.d. (though the mid- or late-60s is also possible). Mark's audience, largely unfamiliar with Jewish customs, needed to become familiar with such customs in order to understand the coming of Jesus as the culmination of God's work with Israel and the entire world, so Mark explains them.

## Purpose and Theme

The ultimate purpose and theme of Mark's Gospel is to present and defend Jesus' universal call to discipleship. Mark returns often to this theme, categorizing his main audience as either followers or opponents of Jesus. Mark presents and supports this call to discipleship by narrating the identity and teaching of Jesus. For Mark, discipleship is essentially a relationship with Jesus, not merely following a certain code of conduct. Fellowship with Jesus marks the heart of the disciple's life, and this fellowship includes trusting Jesus, confessing him, observing his conduct, following his teaching, and being shaped by a relationship with him. Discipleship also means being prepared to face the kind of rejection that Jesus faced. In short, the Gospel of Mark shows that Jesus comes as the fulfillment of Old Testament hopes and promises that God would graciously restore his wayward people. Mark's Gospel is just that—gospel. It is good news.

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<sup>3</sup> *ESV Global Study Bible, Introduction to Mark*, © 2001 – 2018 Crossway





<sup>4</sup> Source: patrickschreiner.com/?p=12638

SERMON NOTES: MARK 1:1-20

## LIFE GROUP STUDY #1: MARK 1:1-20

Whose land are you in at the moment? Who has rights to it? Why?

What are the similarities and dissimilarities between the following verses?  
What do they tell us?

- Genesis 1:1
  
  
- Mark 1:1

The word 'gospel' means important news, urgent news. When the television says "We interrupt this bulletin to bring you an important news flash...." that's a gospel. What is the gospel in Mark 1, according to the following?

- John the Baptist? (verses 2-8)
  
  
- God the Father and God the Holy Spirit? (verses 9-11)
  
  
- Jesus' encounter with Satan? (verses 12-13)
  
  
- Jesus' calling of His first disciples?

From what you saw above, what are your thoughts about this statement: the question isn't "what is the gospel?" but "who is the gospel?" (verses 14-15)

Implications

- What do we learn about Jesus here?
  
  
- What does it mean to trust and obey Jesus?
  
  
- In what area of your life does Mark 1 speak into today? Why?  
How?

## SERMON NOTES: MARK 2:1-3:6

## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 2:1 - 3:6

What is the biggest reversal of fortune that you are aware of?

How did Jesus change the lives of people in the following passages?

- 2:1-12
  
- 2:13-17
  
- 2:18-22
  
- 2:23-28
  
- 3:1-7

What might these pictures of Jesus' transforming power mean for us today in the following?

- Our relationship with God
  
- Our relationship with others
  
- The way we view ourselves

## SERMON NOTES: MARK 4

## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 4

What's the best fruit tree you've ever seen? Why?

The focus of Jesus' parable of the sower has been much debated. Is the emphasis on the sower, the seed, the state of the soil, or all of the above? Does it matter?

*Read Mark 4:26-29*

What hope do we have in gospel proclamation?

What will be the result of our gospel proclamation?

*Read Mark 4:30-34*

What hope do we have in gospel proclamation?

What will be the result of our gospel proclamation?

### **Implications**

From this passage, what is Jesus seeking to produce in us, His people?

How can your life more accurately reflect the priorities of Jesus' Kingdom?

How are you 'sowing the gospel' into the lives of others? How might you grow in confidence in and commitment to bringing the gospel to others?

## SERMON NOTES: MARK 4-5



## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 4-5

What do the following passages tell us about Jesus' authority?

4:35-41

5:1-20

5:21-24, 35-43

5:24-34

Everyone notices the abruptness and breathless speed of Mark's narrative style. Everything happens so quickly, all the statements and descriptions are extremely terse and direct. What do you think Mark is trying to get across?

How might the disciples' lives have been changed after witnessing these events? How can our lives change as a result of believing the truth found in this passage?

Have you ever experienced the power of Jesus in your life, or seen it in the lives of someone else?

In what areas might you pray for Jesus' power to be made present and active:

- In your life
- In the lives of those around you
- In the world around you

Pray for the above

## SERMON NOTES: MARK 8

## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 8

What is your country of origin? Prove it in your group.

Who is Jesus? (8:27-30)

What did He come to do? (8:31-33)

What is the appropriate response to the above? We're given three commands in verse 34. What might this look like in our lives?

In verses 35-38, we're given four reasons why we should deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Jesus. What are these four reasons? Why would Jesus give them?

An old question is: if you were charged with being a Christian, what evidence would the prosecutor produce to convict you? How might your life greater reflect the commands of Jesus to His people in Mark 8?

People today struggle with the idea that we must absolutely submit all of our thinking and practice to the Lordship of Christ. How can we answer a person who struggles like that?

SERMON NOTES: MARK 10:13-52

## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 10:13-52

What do you want out of life? What 'payoff' are you seeking in the things you do?

What do Jesus' words to the disciples and the rich young ruler tell us about entrance into God's kingdom?

- Mark 10:13-16
  
- Mark 10:17-31

In verse 21, why would Jesus "send away sad" someone who filled him with love?

What does Jesus teach about wealth and riches in verses 23-31? Why do you think riches are such a spiritual snare? What is Jesus promising in verses 29-31 and how can we "lose" and "gain" some of these things today?

Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. You know something the rich young man did not. How can this make Jesus' call to us a joy?

What does Jesus' answer to James and John in verses 32-34 tell us about life in His kingdom? What does this life look like:

- In James' and John's day
  
- For us today

SERMON NOTES: MARK 11:1-33

## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 11:1-33

What sorts of things do we do to be recognized by others?

In a book that is fast-paced and briefer than the other Gospels, there's a lot of detail packed into Mark 11:1-11. There's a lot of description given. Why do you think Mark did this here?

Jesus speaks about faith and fruit in verses 12-25. What does He say about them, and why?

Fruit

Faith

What are the dangers to your faith and fruitfulness? Here are three possibilities:

The dangers to your faith:

- Is God good?
- Complacency
- Self-reliance

What are you going to do to grow in faith (Mark 11:22) this week? Be specific.

## SERMON NOTES: MARK 14:1-42



## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 14:1-50

Make a list of the different kinds of phobias that people suffer from. What's your deepest fear?

As you read Mark 14:1-42, try to imagine being Jesus. Try and imagine what He sees, feels, experiences. As we put ourselves in His shoes we can gain greater understanding of how He's put Himself in ours.

What do you see, feel and experience in  
Verses 1-9

Verses 10-11

Verses 12-25

Verses 26-31

Verses 32-42

Verses 43-50

In how many ways does Jesus show his obedience to the Father in this passage?

Martin Luther commented on this passage: "Never man feared death like this man". Why? What did it mean?

Along with Hebrews 4:14-16, in what other ways is Jesus' example in the garden full of practical comfort and guidance for us?

Pray for each other.

SERMON NOTES: MARK 15:1-39

## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 15:1-39

Forgiveness is costly. Describe a situation where you found it hard to forgive someone.

The scene changes quickly in Mark 15. Enormous events that had been foretold in the pages of the Old Testament are fulfilled in short, sharp scenes and sentences. How would you summarise what was going on in...

15:1-15

15:16-20

15:21

15:22-32

15:33-37

15:38

15:39

What is Mark trying to get across about human nature in these descriptions of the mocking, spitting, beating?

Some have called verse 34 “the most important and terrible question ever asked.” Why might this be true?

How can this cry help you when you feel alone and forsaken (even by God)?

Reflecting on the above, what are the implications of Jesus’ death for us today?

SERMON NOTES: MARK 15:40 – 16:8

## LIFE GROUP STUDY: MARK 15:40 – 16:8

What was the last thing that truly turned your life upside down?

What are we to learn from the fact that the witnesses and people showing faithfulness to Jesus here are Joseph, a Pharisee (15:40-47), women (16:1-8), and a Roman centurion (see 15:39, 44)?

List all the possible alternative explanations for the resurrection (other than that it happened!). Now consider all the ways that Mark's information and accounts undermines these explanations.

Read 16:7. What is the significance of the angel's assignment to "go, tell His disciples and Peter?"

Why does Mark take such care to show that the resurrection was a historical event? Why does that matter?

Most of the reliable manuscripts we have indicate Mark's gospel ending abruptly at 16:8. If (as it seems) he ended it that way, why did he do so, do you think?

