

LIFEGROUP STUDIES

TERM 1, 2025

Where the

Word

of a

King is

there is

power

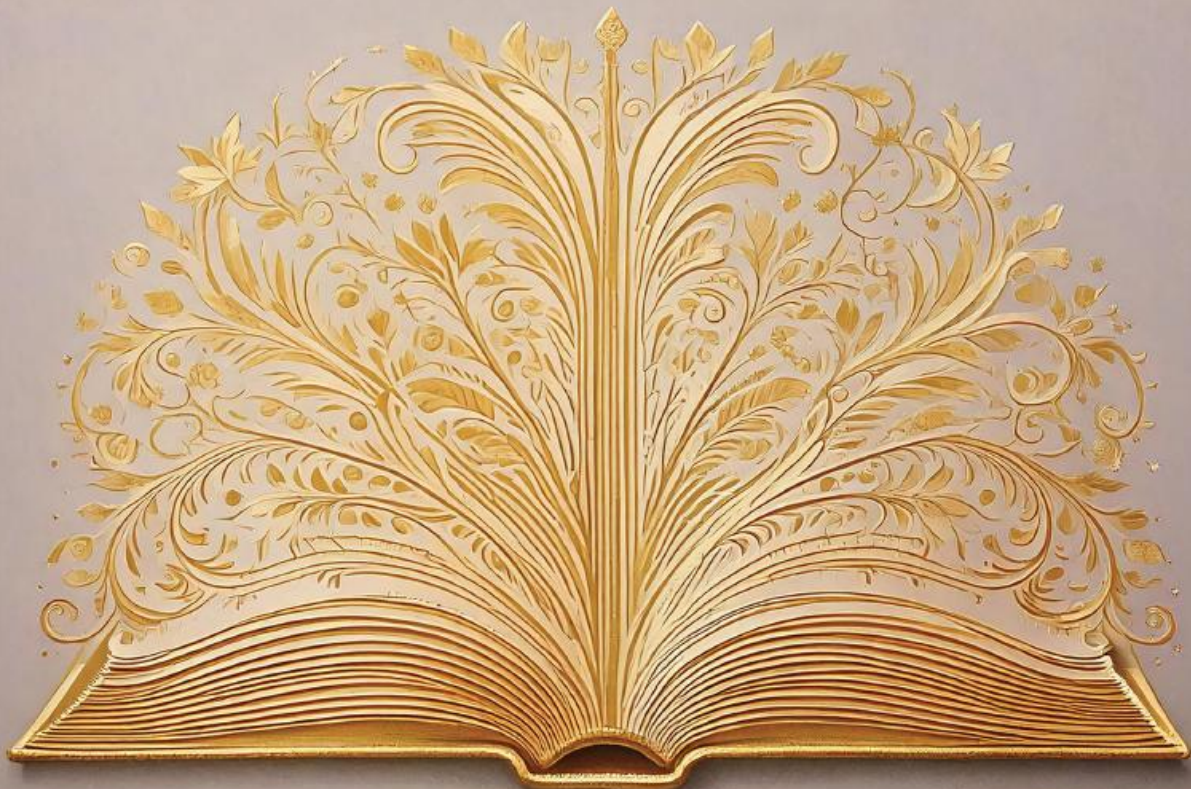


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About the Gospel of Mark

The Gospel of Mark, traditionally attributed to John Mark, offers a vivid, action-packed account of Jesus' life and ministry. According to early church tradition recorded by Papias, Mark wrote his Gospel in close consultation with the Apostle Peter, lending the book apostolic authority despite Mark not being one of the twelve disciples. Likely composed to meet the early church's need for a written record of Jesus' ministry, Mark's narrative also reflects a clear evangelistic purpose, prioritizing rapid storytelling and a relentless progression toward the cross.

Scholars suggest Mark's Gospel was the earliest written account, serving as a source for Matthew and Luke. Its simple, immediate style and numerous Latin terms suggest it was written for a Roman audience. Though the date is debated, it was likely composed before Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70, possibly as early as A.D. 45. If Luke used Mark and completed his Gospel during Paul's Roman imprisonment, Mark had to have been written by A.D. 60.

Thematically, Mark addresses humanity's existential dilemmas—balancing hope and progress against suffering and destruction—by pointing to the resolution of these paradoxes through Jesus Christ. The broken relationship between humanity and God stands at the heart of this struggle, and Mark presents Jesus as the unique figure who bridges this divide.

Structurally, the Gospel has two main sections. The first half (chapters 1–8) alternates between Jesus' growing popularity and rising opposition from Jewish leaders, creating an atmosphere of optimism. However, a shift occurs at Caesarea Philippi (8:27–31), where Jesus reveals his destiny as the suffering Messiah. His disciples' struggles with faith and understanding deepen as the narrative progresses toward the crucifixion.

Mark's Gospel is rich with thematic markers, such as repeated emphasis on spiritual blindness and transitional verses (e.g., 3:6, 6:6a, 8:21) that build tension in Jesus' mission. Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi that Jesus is the Christ (8:29) and the Roman centurion's declaration, "Surely this man was the Son of God" (15:39), bookend the Gospel's central paradox. These declarations reveal that Jesus' identity as Messiah and Son of God is fully understood not in power, but in his suffering and apparent defeat. Through the cross, Mark declares, Jesus achieves ultimate victory.

About these studies

We're starting the year by focusing on Jesus, the foundation of our faith. This study booklet contains twelve studies covering most of the first main section of Mark's Gospel. These studies will take us up to Easter. After Easter, following a short series, we'll return to Mark in Term 2 to explore the second half of the Gospel over nine studies.

Life Groups begin meeting at different times early in the year, so we've designed this plan to be flexible. Your group can start at the beginning of the booklet or jump in at the week your meetings start in order to align with the sermon series. The same flexibility applies for the start of Term 2—your group can choose its own study, follow the short series along with the Church, or begin the second part of Mark ahead of schedule.

This booklet uses the SOAP framework: Scripture, Observations, Application, and Prayer, with subheadings to guide your study.

- **Scripture:** We believe Scripture is clear and understandable. By engaging directly with the text, we can explore what it says and discern its meaning for us today.
- **Observation:** As we examine the text, questions may arise. Some answers might not be in the text, and we must let the passage guide us, not impose our biases. The goal is to identify the passage's main idea—whether a key verse or a timeless principle.
- **Application:** Scripture, empowered by the Spirit, transforms us. From our observations, we ask what to believe or how to act, aiming for practical, everyday application.
- **Prayer:** Group prayer should reflect on the text and application, thanking God for His word and asking for help to live it out.

For those finding the text or method challenging, additional questions are included for deeper reflection. Specifically, in this series two key questions to ask every week are “What does this tell us about Jesus?” and “What does this tell us about following him?”

I'll be praying for you and your group as you begin this year looking at our Saviour, Jesus Christ. May your affections for Him deepen, and may your actions increasingly reflect who He is.

Andrew Vella

Mark 1:1-20 - So Much Authority

Scripture

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

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way” —

³ “a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.’ ”

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

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

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

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

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

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

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. From this brief introduction what do we learn already about who Jesus is and what His message is?

2. If a non-Christian asked you, how would you summarize the good news in two sentences?

3. What have you given up since you responded to Jesus' call, "Follow Me"?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 1:21-45 - The Authoritative Call

Scripture

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

²⁵ “Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶ The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

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

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

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

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

⁴⁰ A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

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

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

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about who Jesus is and what His priorities are?
2. Which teachings of Jesus do you find astonishing?

3. When Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law, He did not use any spells, incantations, or rituals. What does this say about His power and authority?

4. To what extent do you take time out to pray after a very busy schedule? What is the best time for you to spend time in intense prayer: early in the morning, during the day, or in the evening?

5. Besides physical health, what did the leper gain from his encounter with Jesus? How does that compare with what we gain?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 2:1-17 - Authority to Restore the Fallen

Scripture

2 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? ¹⁰But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, ¹¹“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

¹³Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. ¹⁴As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

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

¹⁷On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about who Jesus is and the power that He has?
2. What is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven or get up and walk?” Why do you say that?
3. How does Jesus show that He can forgive sins? How does this paradigm in this story also work with the cross and the empty tomb?

4. In what ways do you identify with Levi, the outcast tax collector? What do you appreciate about God's grace?

5. Do you know someone who does not realize he or she is spiritually terminally sick? What might you say that could convince them of their condition?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 3:7-35 - Authority of an Undivided Ministry

Scripture

⁷ Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. ⁸ When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. ⁹ Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. ¹⁰ For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. ¹¹ Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” ¹² But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.

¹³ Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴ He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons.

¹⁶ These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), ¹⁷ James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), ¹⁸ Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

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

²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

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

³⁰ He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

³¹ Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

³³ “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His followers?

2. Which is more demanding, trying to please people or trying to please God?
Which is more tiring? More rewarding?

3. Keeping in mind the deity of Christ and His omniscience and foreknowledge, why do you think He chose Judas Iscariot as one of His apostles?

4. How is Jesus' response to His family good news for Gentiles? For sinners?
And a motivation for world mission?

5. Do we see our discipleship in terms of being with Jesus? How do we do this?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 4:1-34 - Authority on the Beach

Scripture

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

⁹ Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."

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

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
and ever hearing but never understanding;
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His teachings?
2. How can you make sure that the worries of life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the other desires of the world will not choke the life out of your Christian walk?
3. What is one biblical truth that you want to cultivate in your life each day this week?
4. Who is one person with whom you could share the promise of the kingdom of God?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 4:35-41 - Authority in the Boat

Scripture

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

³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, “Quiet! Be still!” Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.

⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, “Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?”

⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, “Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!”

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His power and authority?
2. Note the four questions in the passage and how they are not explicitly answered. How might you answer the four questions asked?
3. In what way would it be comforting to be in the presence of Jesus? In what way would it be terrifying?
4. Does something you have read in the Gospels make you stop and say, “Who then is this?” What about Christ amazes you the most?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 5:1-20 - Authority to restore a right mind

Scripture

5 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ²When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

⁶When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” ⁸For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

⁹Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” ¹⁰And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

¹¹A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. ¹²The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” ¹³He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

¹⁴Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. ¹⁵When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ¹⁶Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” ²⁰So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His power and authority?
2. Why didn't Jesus let the healed man follow him?
3. What does this account tell us about how much training and experience are needed before we can testify to others about Jesus?

4. Pretend you are the healed man, what would your message be? What is your actual message about Jesus and His mercy towards you?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 5:21-43 - Authority to Restore Life

Scripture

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. ²³ He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ”

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

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

³⁶ Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

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

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

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His power and authority?
2. Compare and contrast the sick woman and the dead girl? What is the same, what is different?

3. Imagine you were Jairus in verse 30 when Jesus stopped and then again in verse 35 when you received the news of your daughter's death. What would you have been thinking? Have you ever been frustrated with God's timing? Have you ever felt He waited until it was too late—but then He came through? Talk about this.

4. Jesus would have been (ceremonially) unclean by touching these two women, yet He makes them clean. What does this say about what Jesus is able to do for us and our (spiritual) uncleanness?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 7:1-30 - Sent with a Disciplined Authority

Scripture

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

⁵ So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?”

⁶ He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

“ ‘These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

⁷ They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.’

⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

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

¹⁴ Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵ Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.” ^[16]

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

²⁰ He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹ For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality,

theft, murder,²² adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.²³ All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

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

²⁷ “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

²⁸ “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

²⁹ Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

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

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His teachings?
2. What is the connection between pride and legalism?
3. How can you guard against practicing the type of tradition-bound, external religion that Jesus condemned?
4. In what ways do other religions focus on external actions? How is Christianity different from each of those religions?
5. Why was the Syrophenician woman happy with mere “crumbs”? What can we learn from her attitude?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 7:31-37 - Authority for the Vulnerable

Scripture

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

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

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

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and His power and authority?
2. Why do you think Jesus “sighed deeply” before he healed the deaf man? How does that encourage your faith in Him?
3. Often in Mark Jesus instructs people not to tell anyone about what He has done. Why do you think He says this?
4. What difference does it make in your everyday life that Jesus has all power and authority over the world?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 8:1-21 - Loaf on a Boat Authoritative Caution

Scripture

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

⁴His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?”

⁵“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied.

⁶He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. ⁷They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, ¹⁰he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

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

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

¹⁶They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”

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

“Twelve,” they replied.

²⁰“And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

They answered, “Seven.”

²¹He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and feelings towards the crowds and Pharisees? Give reasons for your answers.

2. In what ways has God provided for the needs of you and your family?

3. What did Jesus want His disciples to learn from the Pharisees and Herod?

4. How can we guard against misinterpreting or ignoring the Scriptures?

5. What can you do to steer clear of the evil and corruption in your workplace, community, or home life?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

Mark 8:22-38 - Taking up crosses Authority

Scripture

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

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

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

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

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

²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

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

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

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

Observations

Questions from the text

What verses are unclear? Does the rest of the text help answer your questions?

Key

Which verse/idea does this whole passage hang off, and why?

Application

From the key above, what is this passage telling us today?

Extra Questions

1. What do we learn about Jesus and who He is?
2. Why do you think Jesus asked about His identity at this point? Why do you think Jesus asked the two questions in the order He did?
3. How is Peter like the blind man? What do you suppose Peter was thinking when he rebuked Jesus (8:32)? What are man's concerns (8:33)?

4. Who do you say Jesus is?

5. What does it mean to follow Christ and to take up your cross?

6. How can we make sure we “have in mind the things of God”?

Prayer

Thank God for the truth in this passage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us live out that truth.

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