

## Introduction to the Book of Mark



In a manner unlike any other gospel, Mark includes fast-paced, action-packed details that leave the reader astounded at the magnitude of the ministry of Jesus. Here are a few details to keep in mind as we jump into this great book together.

### Author:

Unlike other books in the New Testament, such as the Epistles, the gospel accounts don't include the names of the authors. This has led to some debate regarding the exact authorship of the books, but it is universally held that Mark is the author of the second gospel.

### Background & Setting:

Mark was written to the church at large, and so there is a distinctly non-Jewish flavor to his book that is absent from the other gospels. For instance, Mark includes fewer references to the OT than other gospel writers do, and he leaves out several anecdotes that would have held particular interest to the Jews.

### Themes:

The themes of Mark unmistakably include the presentation of Jesus as the "Suffering Servant," as Mark goes to great pains to reveal the humanity of Christ, as well as the presentation of the high cost of discipleship that the followers of Jesus will undoubtedly have to pay.

### Think about it:

As you read through the book of Mark, here are a few things to pay careful attention to:

1. Watch as Mark paints a picture of Christ unveiled in all of His humanity. It is beautiful and convicting to see.
2. Understand the claims of true discipleship that will rise to the surface of this gospel. Jesus demands your all.
3. Allow the humanity of Christ and His rightful claim upon your life to drive you to worship Him. He is worthy of your completely dedicated life.

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3. Allow the humanity of Christ and His rightful claim upon your life to drive you to worship Him. He is worthy of your completely dedicated life.



**Date:** Tuesday, January 1

**Passage:** Mark 1

1. Mark begins with the account of John the Baptist (v. 1-15). Why do you think he does this?

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2. As Jesus preaches in verse 15, He calls for people to “repent and believe the gospel” with great urgency. What does the urgency of Jesus’ invitation mean to you?

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3. Jesus calls his first disciples in verses 16-20. If Jesus were to ask you to follow Him, what are some things that would be hard for you to leave? Do you think you would be willing to leave them?

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4. The people were amazed a Jesus’ authority & teaching (v. 21-27). What does that tell you about His power for you today?

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5. Even though Jesus was really busy, He still got up early to pray. How faithful are you at spending time with God?

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Jesus is a unique person. He was chosen by the Father (v. 1-11), He is subject to temptation (v. 12-13), and He has amazing power (v. 21-32; 40-45). Pray & ask God to give you the strength to follow Him like the disciples did (v. 16-20), and to develop a relationship with God like He did (v. 35-38).



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**Date:** Wednesday, January 2

**Passage:** Mark 2

1. Mark 2:5 says that “*Jesus saw their faith,*” and then He worked a miracle. What are some areas in your life where you know that you need more faith?

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2. Notice how Jesus specifically chose to fellowship with sinners (v. 13-17). Do you realize that’s what He did when He chose you? What does that tell you about your interaction with others?

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3. In v. 21-22, Jesus uses the picture of wineskins to illustrate that true repentance can’t be contained in old, external traditions. Jesus brings a new era with new ways. How has Jesus changed you from your old ways?

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4. Jesus makes it clear that He is lord over the Sabbath, and thus that He is God (v. 23-28). He is expressing His unique power! As a true disciple of Jesus, in what ways can you acknowledge His unique power in your life today?

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Jesus shows mercy and love to those who have faith in Him (v. 1-12). He delights in choosing to fellowship with the outcasts of society (v. 13-17). He is not interested in adapting to your old methods of vain self-righteous cleansing (v. 18-22), and He wants to make it clear to you that He is God (v. 23-28). Pray, and ask God for strength to honor Him for each of these unique gifts today.



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Date: Thursday, January 3

Passage: Mark 3

1. Verse 5 says that Jesus was *angry* over the disbelief of the Pharisees. The anger of Jesus comes as a result of His displeasure with sin. Are there areas in your life where your disbelief may displease, or even anger Jesus?

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2. The unclean spirits knew that Jesus was the Son of God (v. 11-12). What does that tell you about His power?

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3. Jesus' own family members thought that He was "*out of His mind*" (v. 21). How can that comfort you as you follow Him?

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4. The unforgivable sin in v. 29 is the sin of attributing the specific acts of Jesus while He was on earth to Satan. Why do you think Jesus dealt so harshly with this sin?

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5. Jesus identifies all of those who do His will as His family members (v. 35). Would He be able to identify you as His family member? What are some specific areas that must change in order for Him to do so?

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"Lord, help us to follow you with such passion that we might be readily identified as your true family members! Give us the strength to follow you no matter who rejects us (v. 21), and help us never to bow to the sin of unbelief (v. 4-5, v. 28-30)."



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**Date:** Friday, January 4

**Passage:** Mark 4

1. Mark includes many of Jesus' parables in his gospel. The first parable is given (v. 1-9), and then interpreted (v. 14-20). What kind of ground is in the soil of your heart? How can you resolve to be "good soil" in 2013?

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2. Verses 21-24 indicates that God expects each of us to be responsible for the truth that we have been exposed to. What are some specific ways in which you receive truth routinely? How can you be responsible with the truth that you are exposed to?

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3. God expects gradual, but remarkable growth for those in His kingdom (v. 26-34). Are you demonstrating spiritual growth in your life? What are some areas of recent growth that you have seen?

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4. The disciples are rebuked for their lack of faith in the midst of a great storm (v. 40)! But Jesus uses the storm to them who He is (v. 41). God uses the storms of life to grow our faith and to show us who He is. What are some storms that God has brought you through? What have you learned about God through the storm?

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There are many themes in this chapter for us to meditate on today. Let's specifically ask God to make us "good soil," for His Word to grow in, to allow us to be changed by His truth, and to cause us to see Him and worship Him in the midst of the storms of our lives.



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**Date:** Saturday, January 5

**Passage:** Mark 5

1. Usually, we look at the story of Jesus healing the maniac, and we marvel at Jesus' ability to change the lives of others. And we should. But have you ever thought about the fact that you were once the maniac as well? What are some ways that Jesus has changed you?

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2. Once the maniac was changed, he naturally told people (v. 20). How often do you tell others about the change that Jesus has made in your life? Does your answer convict you?

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3. In a series of 23 verses (v. 21-43), Jesus performs two remarkable miracles, and I am mindful of His endless compassion. As a follower of Jesus, He bids you to have equal compassion on others. List two specific ways that you can have compassion on others like Jesus today.

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4. Do you think Jesus was serious when He said that the girl was "sleeping" in verse 39? What does that tell you about His view of death?

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The same Jesus who changed the maniac of Mark 5 has changed you today. Meditate on that wonderful truth today. Don't just look at others as a picture of the maniac. Realize the tremendous power of the gospel at work in your own life! You are the maniac! Praise Jesus for transforming grace!



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**Date:** Sunday, January 6

**Passage:** Proverbs 1; Review Mark 1-5

1. After reading Proverbs 1, what do you think are some of the ways that you will be enticed to sin this week?

According to this chapter, how can you refuse the enticement?

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2. What is the punishment for refusing to listen to wisdom? What is the reward for listening to wisdom?

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3. List 3 things that you have learned about who Jesus is from your review of Mark 1-5.

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4. List 2 specific ways that you can live any of the truths of Mark 1-5 this week.

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**Date:** Monday, January 7

**Passage:** Mark 6

1. Jesus was rejected by those who lived in His own hometown (v. 1-6). The gospel does that to people. It is an offense. Are you willing to suffer rejection for the gospel?

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2. Do you think that the disciples were scared when they were commissioned (v. 7-13)? What are some of your greatest fears when it comes to sharing the gospel?

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3. John the Baptist gladly gave His life for Jesus. What can we learn from that? How should his surrender impact the way we view discipleship?

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4. In the second half of this chapter, Jesus begins performing great miracles. He shows His power over natural laws (v. 30-44), creation (v. 45-52), and sickness (v. 53-56). What impacted you the most when you read these three miracles? How can you learn and apply those truths to your life today?

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This chapter is really important when it comes to understanding what Jesus requires of true disciples. Jesus shows us His own rejection, He shows us what He expected of His apostles, and we see the illustration of ultimate rejection with the martyrdom of John the Baptist. Is discipleship scary? Yes!!! But Jesus doesn't stop there! Next, he shows us His power with three incredible miracles. If Jesus has such great power, don't you think that we should follow Him, no matter how great his expectations are? God, help us to be true disciples who boldly live the gospel, and unashamedly rest in your ultimate power!



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Date: Tuesday, January 8

Passage: Mark 7

1. It is totally obvious that Jesus wants no part of those who hold fast to the traditions of men, but reject the true claims of the gospel (v. 1-13). Why do you think it's so easy to hold fast to tradition over the gospel? How can you avoid doing that?

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2. Jesus' point in v. 14-22 is to convince the crowd that they must develop a heart for God. Actions alone won't do. We must tirelessly cleanse our hearts from every evil thing. What are some things that are in your heart that you know must go if you would please Christ?

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3. Jesus showed great compassion in v. 24-30. He healed a Gentile, even though His primary ministry at this time was to the Jews. He healed her because of her faith. How strong is your faith in Jesus today?

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4. Why did Jesus continually tell people not to speak about him? Were they very good at keeping that commandment? In contrast to those people, why don't you think it's very hard for you to speak about Jesus?

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Pray today and ask the Lord to help you to have a passion for the truth claims of the gospel, not the traditions of men. Ask God to open your eyes to areas where you may have elevated man's teaching above God's commandments. Pray for faith like the Gentile women, and zeal like those who couldn't keep silent about Jesus.



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Date: Wednesday, January 9

Passage: Mark 8

1. Why do you think that the Pharisees argued with Jesus, requesting a sign (v. 11-13)? How come your faith in Jesus is sometimes just as weak as the Pharisees? What has God done for you that should strengthen your faith?

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2. Jesus asks five quick questions in verses 18-21. They were designed to convict the disciples about their hard hearts, and lack of faith in His ability to provide. Think about your life and list several reasons why you should trust in Jesus at all times.

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3. Peter confesses Jesus as “the Christ” in verse 29. Why do you think that this was so significant?

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4. Shortly after this incredible moment (v. 29), Jesus has to strongly rebuke Peter (v. 33)! Peter wants his own way, but Jesus needs him to understand that the cross comes before the crown. What are some ways that you want your own way instead of God’s plan?

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5. Verses 34-38 include the ultimate description of discipleship. You must be willing to follow Jesus with such passion that you would die for Him. I don’t want you to write anything down about these verses, I simply want you to read over them repeatedly and answer this question in your mind: “According to these verses, am I truly a follower of Jesus?”



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**Date:** Thursday, January 10

**Passage:** Mark 9

1. Imagine being there during the Transfiguration. What do you think your reaction would have been? What does the account of the Transfiguration tell us about Jesus?

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2. Again, Mark provides us with a riveting story of faith in Jesus in verses 14-29. The faith of the man cried out to Jesus (v. 24), is contrasted with the faithlessness of the disciples who weren't able to cast out the demon (v. 28-29). Which one of these two examples do you think you resemble?

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3. Often in the gospels, Jesus uses children to illustrate faith in Him. He does it again in verse 37. Why do you think that Jesus does this? Do you have faith like a child?

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4. In verses 38-50, Jesus goes to great pains to explain to His disciples the differences in people who are for Him or against Him. We are to support all of those in the body of Christ who labor for the sake of Jesus, even if they are different than us (v. 40-41)! Can you think of any people who the Lord wants you to support? Further, are you doing a good job of remaining "salty" (v. 50-51) so that people know what "team" you are on?

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"Lord, give me faith like a child, and distinctiveness like salt. Use me to make your name famous!"



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Date: Friday, January 11

Passage: Mark 10

1. How important does the matter of divorce seem to be to Jesus?

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2. What does the way Jesus treats children show you about Him?

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3. The rich young man is one of the saddest tales in Scripture. Are you willing to follow Jesus on His terms? Can you think of anything in your life right now that you're not willing to give up?

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4. The story of James and John is riveting, because it seems so familiar. We can all identify with wanting to be first! How good at you at submitting to the sovereign will of God, rather than self-promotion? Jesus wants His followers to have His humility (v. 45).

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5. Once again, another person is healed on the basis of his faith (v. 52). Do you think Jesus cares a great deal about faith? What are some areas in your life that you struggle with trusting God completely in?

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It is so important that we understand the primacy of humility and faith in our Christian walk. The rich young man lacked faith to go "all-in" with Christ, and he went away empty. Blind Bartimaeus had faith, and he went away full.

Pray today, and ask God to increase your faith, even in the midst of seemingly impossible circumstances.



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**Date:** Saturday, January 12

**Passage:** Proverbs 2; Review Mark 6-7

1. Who is the only one that can give wisdom, according to Proverbs 2?

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2. What is the only way to be delivered from temptation in this life?  
How are you doing when it comes to defeating temptation?

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3. What will the punishment of the wicked be, according to Prov. 2:22?  
How does that reality impact you?

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4. List 3 things that you learned about Jesus from your review of Mark 6-7.

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5. List 2 specific ways that you can live out the truths that you learned in Mark 6-7 this week.

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**Date:** Sunday, January 13

**Passage:** Proverbs 3; Review Mark 8-10

1. What should your attitude be towards the discipline of the Lord, according to Proverbs 3?

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2. What is the most valuable thing that anyone could find? Do you have it?

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3. What will be the inheritance of the wise (v. 35)? Is it always easy to wait for that inheritance?

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4. List 3 things that you learned about Jesus from your review of Mark 8-10.

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5. List 2 specific ways that you can live out the truths that you learned in Mark 8-10 this week.

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**Date:** Sunday, January 13

**Passage:** Proverbs 3; Review Mark 8-10

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Date: Monday, January 14

Passage: Mark 11

1. The same crowd that cheered Jesus with a Messianic welcome (v. 9-11) is the crowd that would later reject Jesus at His crucifixion. What does that tell you about the nature of your human heart?

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2. The story of the fig tree (v. 12-14) can be confusing to understand. For us, it functions as a divine object lesson. Jesus cursed the tree because it looked fruitful, but it was not, just as the nation of Israel engaged in spiritual hypocrisy, but was spiritually dead. What are some ways in which you engage in spiritual hypocrisy?

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3. Jesus was righteously angry when He saw the perversion of the temple. When was the last time that sin actually made you physically angry? Can you think of times when you should have been angry, but you weren't?

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4. The Jews knew the answer to Jesus' question (v. 30), but they didn't have the courage to admit that He was God. Are you willing to acknowledge the supremacy of Jesus over all things? What are some areas that are hard for you to surrender?

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As I read Mark 11, I am reminded that we must watch our hearts! We are entirely too susceptible to changing our mind based on emotion like the "Hosanna" crowd would do, spiritually hypocrisy, tolerance of wickedness, and a rejection of Jesus' authority. How we need grace!



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**Date:** Tuesday, January 15

**Passage:** Mark 12

1. This chapter begins with one of Jesus' strongest parables. He is pronouncing a coming destruction upon all of those who reject Him. The people were very aware that this was what He was saying; yet they just walked away from Him instead of accepting His truth (v. 12). How receptive are you to God's Word? Do you allow the truths of Christ to change you, or do you reject His authority?

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2. We can learn a lot about how we should respond to government through Jesus' teaching in v. 13-17. How submissive are you to God-given authorities? Are you willing to obey a government that you don't agree with?

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3. What did Jesus say was the greatest commandment? What are some ways that you struggle with keeping this command?

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4. Once again, Jesus deals with the issue of religious hypocrisy. He showcases an example of a hypocrite (v. 38-40), right next to a picture of a sincere believer (v. 41-44). Which category do you think you most often fall into?

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We must be sure that we are receptive to the claims of Christ (v. 1-12), we must submit to our God-given authorities (v. 13-16), we must understand the reality of the resurrection (v. 17-27), we must love others (v. 28-34), and we must reject hypocrisy in our lives (v. 41-44). God, give us strength!



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Date: Wednesday, January 16

Passage: Mark 13

I. Jesus came as the perfect Prophet, Priest, and King.

Mark 13 particularly focuses on His unique roll as the perfect prophet. As the Prophet, He still focuses on true discipleship (v. 13). True discipleship will sacrifice anything for Jesus. Do you realize what you're getting yourself into as a Christ-follower? Are you willing to die for Him?

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2. Read the account Jesus issues regarding the Tribulation (v. 14-23). What a terrible time! What should that motivate you to do?

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3. After Jesus talks about the Tribulation, he notes that He will return and gather His elect unto Himself (v. 24-27). The grace of God in this text is amazing. Stop right now and thank Him for what He WILL do!

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4. When we speak of Christ's return as *imminent*, we mean that it could happen at any time. This truth is taught in verses 32-37. How should you be preparing for the imminent return of Jesus? If He were to come back today, would you be ready?

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The most important thing that you should recognize from this chapter is the fact that you must be ready for the days ahead. This involves at least three things. First, if you are not saved, you must turn to Him before it's too late. Second, if you are saved, you must prepare yourself for His imminent return through claiming His grace for holy living. Finally, you must allow the reality of His imminent return to drive you to make the name of Jesus famous.



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Date: Thursday, January 17

Passage: Mark 14

1. Mary sacrificed greatly when she anointed Jesus, and she probably wasn't even aware that she was symbolically preparing His body for burial. God is faithful to reward sacrifice (v. 9). Are there areas that you have not yet been willing to give to Him?

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2. The betrayal of Judas must have hurt Jesus in the very deepest part of His human existence. Have you ever been hurt by someone you loved? What did it feel like? Were you willing to continue to love that person as Jesus did with Judas?

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3. Once again, Jesus plays the part of Prophet as He foretells Peter's denial. It's much easier to voice your dedication than it is to act it out. What can we learn from this?

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4. When Jesus was in great pain, He immediately stooped to pray (v. 32-42), and yet He still surrendered His will to God's sovereignty. Where do you go when you feel great pain? How faithful are you to pray?

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5. Notice Jesus' meekness in the face of His coming death (v. 43-50; v. 53-65). He willingly laid aside His omnipotence, choosing rather to die for you. How can you thank Him for that today?

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**Date:** Saturday, January 19

**Passage:** Proverbs 4; Review Mark II-12

1. Why do you think that the instruction of a father is so important? What's your attitude towards the instruction given to you by your authorities?

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2. What is the thing that we are to "keep with all diligence?" Why do you think that is the case? How can you keep this commandment?

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3. We're supposed to put away "crooked speech," according to verse 24. Why is that so hard to do? Why should we do it?

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4. List 3 things that you learned about Jesus from your review of Mark II-12.

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5. List 2 specific ways that you can live out the truths that you learned in Mark II-12 this week.

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**Date:** Sunday, January 20

**Passage:** Proverbs 5; Review Mark 13-15

6. Immorality is one of the most deadly sins in the church today. In Proverbs 5, we are encouraged to get as far away from temptation to sexual impurity as possible. What are some practical ways that you can remove temptation towards immorality from your daily routine?

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7. Really, those who fall into sexual immorality fall because they lack the discipline to pursue Jesus as their greatest treasure (v. 23). How can you discipline yourself towards a steadfast pursuit of Jesus this week?

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8. List 3 things that you learned about Jesus from your review of Mark 13-15.

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9. List 2 specific ways that you can live out the truths that you learned in Mark 13-15 this week.

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Date: Monday, January 21

Passage: Mark 16

10. Of all of the facts of history, none is greater than the magnificent truth that Jesus did not stay dead!

Personalize this truth today! What does the resurrection mean to you?

11. Can you imagine the joy that would have filled your heart had you been there on the day of Jesus' resurrection? Why is there joy? Because Jesus' resurrection is the ultimate source of hope! What hope does the glories of the resurrection bring to you today?

12. After rising from the dead, Jesus sends forth his disciples in a passage known as the "Great Commission" in verse 14-18. How are you doing at fulfilling this commission? Are you making disciples?

"See, what a morning, gloriously bright,  
With the dawning of hope in Jerusalem;  
Folded the grave-clothes, tomb filled with light,  
As the angels announce, "Christ is risen!"  
See God's salvation plan,  
Wrought in love, borne in pain, paid in sacrifice,  
Fulfilled in Christ, the Man,  
For He lives: Christ is risen from the dead!" – K. Getty

This brings us to the end of Mark. Now that Jesus had completed His earthly ministry, He takes a well-deserved seat at the right hand of the throne of God (v. 19). The suffering servant has portrayed His humanity in unmistakable fashion. He's shown you the cost of true discipleship, and He has pleaded with you to follow Him until the ends of the age. Not only that, but He has give n you the glorious hope of the resurrection, rendering death completely useless.

What's your reaction to the book of Mark today?



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Passage: Mark 16

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