



St Helen's
Bishopsgate

BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

Reading Mark with a friend



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READING MARK'S GOSPEL WITH A FRIEND

Introductory guide

“But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.” *Mark 4:20*

It's a parable that starts off sounding more like an episode of Gardeners' World than teaching about Jesus' Kingdom (Mark 4:1-20). Seed falls on different soils, and grows in different ways. Unsurprisingly, the most abundant growth comes from the good soil. However Jesus' explanation makes it clear; the seed is the word which people hear and respond to in different ways, and that abundant growth comes from 'the ones who hear the word and accept it.' (Mark 4:20). How will the Kingdom of God grow? As people listen to the word and respond.

This isn't just the message in Mark's gospel. Throughout the New Testament we learn that people need to respond to the message of the Bible. People who hear Jesus' words and believe are those who have eternal life (John 5:24). People are 'born again' (which means 'brought into God's family') by God's word (1 Peter 1:23-25).

So it makes sense that reading the Bible with a friend who isn't a Christian would be a brilliant way of 'sowing the word' (Mark 4:14) – because that is the very thing that they need to listen and respond to.

This is what we see being played out in the New Testament – people making disciples by explaining the gospel to each other – for example Epaphras (Col 1:5-8) who shares the gospel with people in Colossae. Lois, Eunice and Timothy (2 Tim 1:5) are a family who shared the gospel with each other. Prisca and Aquila are a couple who disciple a young Christian (Acts 18:26).

The pattern is simple: People who know the gospel (the good news about Jesus) share that word with others. That's exactly what this short guide is all about. Picking up a copy of Mark's gospel, reading it with someone and talking about what it tells us about the person Jesus Christ.

Why read Mark's gospel?

You could read any of the four gospels with a friend who wants to find out more about Jesus. In fact you could read any part of the Bible together, and it would certainly be time well spent. However, we recommend starting with Mark's gospel specifically, for three reasons:

1. It's relatively short and straightforward.

Mark is the shortest of all the eye-witness accounts of Jesus and has fewer tricky passages that can send conversations off track. That doesn't mean it's fool proof – we still need to think carefully about it and handle it wisely.

2. Many of us have studied it as part of small group Bible study.

We hope that what you learn in your small group Bible study each week will give you the confidence to study Mark's gospel with someone else. It's always easier to discuss something that you feel familiar with. But just to help you along there are notes and a few key questions available for each section.

3. It's all about Jesus.

Mark tells us in his very first sentence what he's writing about: "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." (Mark 1:1) If we want people to find out about Jesus then taking them through a book that the author says is all about him won't be a bad place to start.

How to read Mark's gospel - a simple Bible study outline

If you read Mark's gospel with a friend the aim is not to replicate the study that you did with your small group, or to cover every single point that Mark is making. Rather, the aim is to help your friend discover what the Bible tells us about Jesus.

The following three simple questions will help you to get to the heart of what Mark wants to tell us in his book. Not every passage in Mark will give an answer to every question so treat these questions as a more of a guide than a rigid approach. For each passage in Mark there is a small set of notes and suggested extra questions.

1. **Who is Jesus?** In the first sentence that he writes Mark tells us the identity of Jesus: He is Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1). Mark says that the person of Jesus is the main focus of his gospel; he wants to tell us about Jesus and who he is.

Throughout his gospel Mark identifies Jesus and gives us the evidence that we need to understand who Jesus is.

2. **Why has he come?** Mark's message isn't just about the identity of Jesus, but why he came to earth. Jesus himself tells us several times in Mark why he has come (for example in Mark 1:38 Jesus says that he has come to preach). Three times we learn that Jesus must suffer and die (in chapters 8 to 10). But why? Mark helps us to understand what Jesus came to do.
3. **What does that mean for us?** When Jesus first arrives in Galilee proclaiming the message of his kingdom he tells us what the right response to this news is: "Repent and believe." (Mark 1:15) Jesus makes it clear that the arrival of his kingdom demands a response. It's not possible to sit on the fence when it comes to the claims of Jesus. You can either accept him or reject him. Repent or don't. Believe that he is the Son of God, God's promised King, or don't. Over the course of the whole book Mark builds up a picture of what it looks like to repent and follow Jesus.

Practical stuff

There's no set way of doing a Bible study with a friend, but if you're not sure where to start then you might find the following ideas helpful.

Setting it up

Think about what you're going to say. You don't have to ask someone if they want to do a 'Bible study' with you, especially if they haven't read much of the Bible before. Asking someone 'would you like to look at a bit of the Bible together?' might sound less intimidating. You also don't have to ask them to study the whole of Mark's gospel together, which could sound overwhelming! Why not suggest looking at just the first chapter? If they agree, when you get to the end of your first meeting you can ask if they want to look at the next section.

Before you meet

- **Pray** for you and your friend.
- **Read** the passage you plan to look at, more than once if possible.
- **Think** about the main things you want to talk about.
- **Anticipate** any tricky questions that might come up.

When you meet

- **Meet** somewhere you both feel relaxed.
- **Read** the passage together. You can pick up individual copies of Mark's gospel from a shop or online.
- **Ask questions.** The best questions are those that don't have a 'yes/no' answer, and where the answer can be found in the passage.
- **Listen** to your friend's answer.
- **Help** your friend think about what they are saying:
 - Why do you think that?
 - Have you ever thought about what it would be like if...
 - If this is true what does it mean for us?
 - How does this compare to what our friends usually think?
- If they ask a question that you don't know the answer to – don't panic! It's fine to say that you're not sure of the answer but you're going to find out. Your small group leaders will be more than happy to help you think about how to answer someone's question.

At the end of the meeting

- Ask if they would like to meet again to look at the next part of Mark.
- If possible arrange a time for your next meeting.
- If your friend says they don't want to carry on, again – don't panic! You can ask them why they want to stop; their answer will help you work out how best to carry on sharing the gospel with them.

Further Reading

One To One by Sophie De Witt

One-to-One Bible Reading by David Helm

The gospel and Personal Evangelism by Mark Dever

Mark 1:1-15

1:1 Mark tells us upfront what his book is about: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. They're not just different names for Jesus, but two different ways of saying that he is God's promised King.

1:2-3 The simplest thing that we can observe from this prophecy is that there will be a messenger in the wilderness who is preparing the way for the Lord. The next thing that Mark records is somebody in the wilderness with a message (John the Baptist – 1:4). Not only that, but he seems to be preparing the way for someone greater than him (1:7).

The next person on the scene is Jesus (1:9) who brings a message about the kingdom of God. The Spirit descends on him (1:10) and in a very supernatural moment (a voice from heaven) God identifies him as his son. Could this be the Lord (or the King) that we're looking for?

Some questions that might come up

Why did Jesus get baptised? We don't really get an answer here. However this episode is where the Spirit descends on Jesus (1:10), and where God the Father identifies Jesus as his son (1:11). (Look back to verse 1 and verse 8).

Why do we get all the detail about what John was wearing and eating? One of the prophecies (1:3) comes from a book in the Old Testament called Malachi. In that book we are told the messenger will be Elijah, who was famous for, among other things, wearing hairy clothes and eating locusts and honey. When John the Baptist turns up in this outfit we're meant to realise that he is the Elijah figure that was promised.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What do verses 2 and 3 say is going to happen? How do we see that being fulfilled in the rest of the passage? How many different people identify Jesus? What do they say about him?

Why did he come?

What are the different messages that are being proclaimed?

What does that mean for us?

How does this passage help us understand what Mark's agenda is for the rest of his book?

Mark 1:16-39

This passage is 'a day and a half in the life of Jesus'. And it's a busy time! He calls his first disciples (1:17), teaches in the synagogue (1:21), casts out unclean spirits (1:26), and heals sickness and disease (1:31, 34). He does all of this with great authority - notice the number of times that things happen 'immediately' and the amazement that people have at what Jesus is doing. If Jesus is God's King then this shows us something of what his Kingdom will be like.

However, 1:35 has a change in tone – its early and Jesus heads out to a desolate place to pray. The disciples search for him because everyone wants to know where Jesus is. Jesus is clear about his intentions – he wants to go to the next towns to preach, because that is why he has come (1:38). Jesus hasn't just come to perform miracles – he's bringing a message and he wants people to hear it.

A question that might come up:

Why does Jesus stop the demons from speaking? In the early chapters of Mark it's the evil spirits who are the first to correctly identify Jesus. However Jesus wants to reveal who he is in his own time, when people are ready to understand

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What different things does Jesus have power over?

How does Mark show us that Jesus has authority in each of these areas?

Why did he come?

What do you find surprising about 1:35-59?

What does this tell us about Jesus priority?

Mark 1:40-2:17

Notice the references to sickness or healing in each episode, and also the theme of sin (or being unclean). Healing is not the same as forgiveness, but rather in each circumstance Jesus' ability to heal is a demonstration of his ability and authority to forgive sin.

2:40-45 Jesus shows his willingness and ability to make a leper clean. Leprosy made a person ceremonially unclean which meant that they would have been excluded from the community. Anyone who touched them would have themselves become unclean. However when Jesus reaches out and touches him, it is the leper who becomes clean.

2:1-12 Four friends bring a paralytic to Jesus in a dramatic way, but once they get into the house Jesus doesn't do what they're expecting. The scribes think that Jesus is out of line when he says to the man 'your sins are forgiven' – only God can do that! But Jesus shows them that he does have that authority by healing the man.

2:13-17 There's more surprising behaviour from Jesus as he spends some time with social outcasts – in particular the tax collectors and sinners! Again the scribes suggest that he shouldn't be doing that – but Jesus explains that those people are the ones who need him.

Some questions that might come up:

Why doesn't Jesus want the leper to say anything to anyone? You'll notice that this happens more than once in Mark's gospel. It seems that Jesus wants people to have a right understanding of who he is, rather than just get excited about the miracles that he does.

Why does Jesus call himself the Son of Man? 'Son of Man' is a phrase from the Old Testament that refers to the person that God appoints as an everlasting ruler over his kingdom.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What things does Jesus say about himself?

Why did he come?

Who does Jesus say he has come for?

What does that mean for us?

How do people respond to what Jesus is doing? Which responses are good and which are bad?

Mark 2:18-3:6

We've already seen a bit of grumbling from the scribes about Jesus' actions and behaviour, but now the questions seem to get more direct and increasingly hostile. Jesus isn't towing the line when it comes to the Pharisees ways of doing things. Jesus doesn't always give direct answers to their questions. Rather he explains something about his identity, which helps us to see that their questions have missed the point – that the King is here!

2:18-20 The Pharisees want to know why the disciples aren't fasting. Jesus' answer is linked to his identity – he's the bridegroom, which means its party time, not fasting time.

2:21-22 This mini-illustration makes the point that you can't mix 'old' with 'new' – if you do there are disastrous consequences for both. Jesus is explaining what is happening in each discussion with the Pharisees –he is the 'new' and they want to mix him with the 'old' (their ways) but it doesn't work.

2:23-28 The Pharisees are concerned about the disciples plucking at bits of grain as they walk through a field on the Sabbath. Jesus links himself to David, who was one of the best Kings of Israel. He's saying that he is the King, and its ok for the disciples to eat the grain because they're with him.

3:1-6 Notice that we start to learn about the Pharisees motivations – they want to test Jesus. They won't even answer his question, and he is grieved by the attitude of their hearts. Ultimately their response to Jesus is one of murderous hatred.

A question that might come up:

Why does Jesus call himself the bridegroom? Often in the Old Testament God uses the picture of a wedding or marriage to describe his close relationship to his people. Jesus uses that same picture here to identify himself as God.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What are all the different images or descriptions that Jesus uses for himself?

What do you think the Pharisees have misunderstood about Jesus' identity?

What does that mean for us?

Are you surprised by the Pharisees response to Jesus in 3v6? Why?

Mark 3:7-35

The last passage of Mark finished on something of a cliff-hanger as the Pharisees set out to plot to kill Jesus. However their hatred of him doesn't seem to stop his mission – in fact the momentum just keeps growing. In 3:7-11 we see Jesus drawing huge crowds from all of Israel and beyond (Tyre and Sidon are outside of Jewish territory).

The time has come for Jesus to appoint the twelve apostles. It's like he's appointing lieutenants who will be with him, and be involved in the same work as him (notice the similarity between 3:14-15 and 1:39).

We see a whole range of responses to Jesus in this passage; his family think that he's mad and want to take him away. The Scribes accuse him of being possessed by the devil; Jesus explains that not only is their logic flawed, but that he is stronger than Satan (which explains why he is able to cast out demons). But then there are the crowd sitting around him in 3:32, who Jesus says are his family because they are doing the will of God.

Some questions that might come up:

Who is the strong man? The strong man is Satan (Notice the parallel in 3:25-26 about Satan's house being divided, and 3:27 where the 'strong man' has a house). Jesus is saying that there is someone stronger than the strong man who will enter his house, tie him up and plunder his goods. Jesus is the one who is stronger than Satan.

What is the eternal sin that can't be forgiven? Jesus is clear in 3:28 that all sins will be forgiven. If, however, you reject the source of forgiveness, then no forgiveness will be available to you. When we look at what the scribes are doing (rejecting Jesus' identity by saying that he is from Satan) it seems they are in danger of being on that path.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What are all the different things that people say about Jesus? How does Jesus respond to them?

Why did he come?

Who would you expect to be in Jesus' kingdom? How does this passage change our expectations?

What does that mean for us?

How does the response of Jesus' family compare to that of the crowd?

Mark 4:1-34

Jesus continues to teach about who is in the Kingdom and how it will grow. The main theme of this passage is hearing or listening to the word. The first thing that Jesus says helps us understand what response he is looking for: 'Listen!'

4:1-20 The story is simple enough; seed falls in different locations. Most of it fails to grow, however the seed that falls on good soil grows abundantly. Jesus explains that he is really talking about how different people respond to hearing the 'word'. The people who listen and accept the word are the ones who bear fruit (4:20).

4:21-25 This short parable about a lamp is meant to be an encouragement. Just as a lamp is meant to be seen, the secret of the Kingdom of God is meant to be heard and understood. The second half of this paragraph helps us to understand what sort of listener Jesus wants us to be. Jesus seems to be saying 'Listen up!' The more you listen the more you'll receive – so its worth listening with 'big ears'!

4:26-32 How does Jesus' kingdom grow? In one sense we just don't know – just as the man who sows seed doesn't know how it grows, but just has to gather the harvest. It may look small now but it'll grow...just like a tiny mustard seed that becomes a huge tree.

Suggested questions

Why did Jesus come?

How do these parables help us to understand why Jesus says he came to preach (1:40)?

What does that mean for us?

What might it look like to listen well to Jesus?

Mark 4:35-5:20

This passage and the next one (5:21-6:6) are really one section but it's a lot of material so you might find it easier to cover it in two meetings.

The two big themes in this section are (i) Jesus' power and (ii) responses to Jesus, in particular fear and faith.

4:35-41 Jesus has extraordinary power over nature. This storm must have been bad; the disciples were professional fishermen and they thought they were going to die. A 'great' storm becomes a 'great' calm because Jesus speaks to it. It is as easy as saying to a toddler 'sit down and be quiet!' except the storm obeys! Jesus says they shouldn't have been afraid, but should have faith in him.

5:1-13 A man is possessed by an unclean spirit called 'Legion' because it is actually many demons. Notice all the references to tombs; its as if the man is a living corpse. No one can control him, despite attempts to chain him up and the demons cause the man to harm himself. The demons ask permission to go into some nearby pigs and Jesus allows them. They cause the pigs to rush over a cliff and into the sea, leaving the man free from the demons. This is one of the worst demons that we see in Mark, and Jesus has complete authority and power over it.

5:14-20 There are different responses to what Jesus has done. People from the city are afraid when they see they see the man in his right mind; their wrong fear causes them to beg Jesus to leave. In contrast the man who had been possessed begs to be with Jesus. Jesus says no, but suggests he goes about the region telling others what has been done for him. The man does what Jesus tells him.

A question that might come up:

Isn't it a bit unfair that the pigs die? The fact that the pigs die shows us how destructive this legion of demons was. The demons that had previously been in just one man are powerful enough to destroy two thousand pigs in one go! It doesn't seem to have been Jesus' intention to kill the pigs; rather, he gives permission for the legion to enter them, and it is the demons destructive nature that forces them into the sea, drowning them. This episode should draw our attention to how powerful Jesus is, and what a wonderful thing he has done for the man, rather than feeling too sorry for the pigs.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

How would you describe Jesus' power in these two episodes?

How would you answer the disciples' question in 4:41?

What does that mean for us?

What are the right responses to Jesus? What are the wrong responses?

How is Mark helping us understand that we can put our faith in Jesus?

Mark 5:21-6:6

This passage goes with the previous one (4:35-5:20) and continues to explore the themes of Jesus power and people's responses to him.

5:25-34 Jesus has extraordinary power over sickness. A woman is desperate for help and approaches Jesus secretly, hoping just to touch his clothing so that she will be healed. She has been ill for twelve years and yet the moment she touches Jesus clothes she is completely healed. Jesus stops to explain to her that she is now part of God's family. In a moment of extraordinary compassion towards a woman who would have previously been a social outcast, Jesus calls her 'daughter' and tells her to go in peace. He commends the woman's faith in him to heal her.

5:35-43 Jesus demonstrates his power over death. People come to Jairus with the desperate news that his daughter has died. Jesus tells Jairus not to fear, but to believe (or have faith). When they reach the house the local community are incredulous when Jesus says that she's only asleep; they've already started to mourn her death. However when Jesus goes up to her room he only has to take her hand and speak to her for her to be raised up. She's even well enough to have some lunch (5:43)! For Jesus, raising someone to life is as easy as waking a little girl up from an afternoon nap.

6:1-6 Jesus goes to his hometown and in stark contrast to Jairus and the woman, experiences people treating him with contempt. The cynical approach of the people is to focus on the fact that they know his family and to wonder how 'this man' could be doing such miraculous things. The people don't believe in Jesus, and he performs only a few healings.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

How desperate are the situations of Jairus and the woman? How would you describe Jesus' power in these episodes?

How would you describe Jesus' care for the people he meets?

What does that mean for us?

What are the right responses to Jesus? What are the wrong responses?

How is Mark helping us understand that we can put our faith in Jesus?

Mark 6:7-29

6:7-13 Jesus' disciples are sent out to do the work that Jesus appointed them for (look back at 3:14-15). Their message is that people should repent (6:12). Jesus explains that they should expect two different responses – either people will welcome them into their homes (6:10) or people will not receive them or their message (6:11). The disciples' response to the latter group of people should be to leave.

6:14-20 Mark gives us a mini flashback to explain how John the Baptist (1:4) came to be beheaded. John has warned Herod that he needs to repent from an unlawful marriage (6:18). Herod has arrested John because his wife is so angry about it. At this point Herod perhaps seems undecided in his response to John. His actions are mixed – on the one hand he keeps John 'safe' and likes to listen to what he says (6:20), however he also keeps John in prison and doesn't act on what John is saying (6:17).

6:21-29 Herod's situation quickly unravels on the night of his birthday party. His stepdaughter dances for the crowd and pleases Herod (its exactly what you think is going on). In a moment of rash bravado Herod promises her whatever she asks for. Her mother, who is seeking revenge on John (6:19), takes the opportunity (6:21) to get what she wants and sends her daughter back in to demand the head of John the Baptist on a plate. Here is the moment for Herod to show where his allegiance really lies – will he do the right thing and protect the man of God, or will he cave in to her request to save his reputation? Disappointingly, despite his sorrow (6:26), Herod orders John's execution. Herod's downfall illustrates that true repentance requires definite action – when it comes to Jesus' message you can't sit on the fence.

A question that might come up:

Why does Jesus tell the disciples not to take bread, bags or money on their trip? The way that people treat the disciple is an indication as to whether or not they have accepted their message. By sending the disciples out without provisions, it forces them to be dependent on the people they take their message to.

Suggested questions

Why did Jesus come?

What is Jesus message being taken out by the apostles?

What does that mean for us?

What do you think about Herod by 6:20? What do you think about him by the end of chapter 6?

What opportunities did Herod have to act on what he had heard?

Mark 6:30-52

6:30-44 Jesus performs an incredible miracle by feeding an enormous crowd from one small packed lunch. Jesus has extraordinary power over creation – try making one small bread roll feed 1000 people until they're full, with spare food leftover. We also see Jesus' compassion for the people; when he observes that they are like sheep without a shepherd he begins to teach them (6:34).

6:45-52 Jesus walks on the sea during a particularly bad storm – another miracle involving creation. The disciples are terrified – they think he's a ghost. Jesus reassures them that it is him (6:50).

However is there more going on in this passage than meets the eye? 6:52 gives us a big clue – when the disciples don't recognise Jesus, Mark tells us it is because they've misunderstood something about the 'loaves' (the feeding miracle). Mark wants us to understand the significance of these two events and how they are linked to the Exodus – a story in the Old Testament.

Two key events in the story of Exodus involve a miraculous feeding in the desert and a miraculous crossing of a sea. Mark retells these two similar episodes of Jesus using lots of imagery that would easily remind a Jewish reader of the story of Exodus. The story of Exodus is about God rescuing his people from slavery so that they can be in a relationship with him; Mark is showing us that Jesus is here to perform a similar rescue. But who is he rescuing and how?

A question that might come up:

Why does Jesus intend to pass by the disciples when he is walking on the water? This is one of the details that helps us make the link to Exodus. In Exodus it is a hugely significant moment when God 'passed by' Moses; here Jesus intends to 'pass by' the disciples. He is showing us something about his identity – that he is God.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What do we learn about Jesus' character?

If Mark is making links back to the story of Exodus what does that tell us about Jesus?

Why did he come?

What does Jesus do for the people?

Mark 6:53-7:23

This passage begins with a discussion between Jesus and the Pharisees about their traditions but by the end Jesus is describing the state of all mankind; he identifies the great human problem as a problem of the heart.

7:1-8 When Jesus' disciples come from the marketplace the Pharisees are concerned that they haven't washed properly. The Pharisees are obsessed with washing everything to stop things being 'defiled'. Mark emphasises how concerned they are about this by including an extensive list of all the things they wash. Jesus answers by calling them hypocrites – they may look good on the outside, but in their hearts they don't love God.

7:9-13 Jesus makes the point even stronger by explaining that the things the Pharisees do to try and make themselves acceptable to God are actually making the situation worse. He uses a worked example where the Pharisees' own tradition (a particular one called 'Corban') actually ends up contradicting one of the Ten Commandments.

7:14-23 Jesus diagnoses the problem that all mankind has. It's not the stuff on the outside that makes you 'unclean' but the stuff that comes out of your heart. Jesus explains it with the help of a biology lesson – if it goes in through your mouth, then it comes out again, so cannot make you 'unclean' before God. It's hard to see how anyone could escape the list in 7:21-22. Jesus is making the point that everybody has a heart that produces evil (Note: he is not making the point that everyone is equally evil).

Suggested questions

What does that mean for us?

What problem are the Pharisees concerned about and what is their solution?

Why doesn't the Pharisees solution work?

Are you shocked by Jesus' description of humanity? Why/why not?

Mark 7:24-8:10

You may find it helpful in this study to refer to the map that goes with these notes. The location of these three events is key to our understanding. They all take place outside of Jewish territory, teaching us that Jesus is here to bring his Kingdom to all people, not just the Jews.

7:24-30 This woman shows extraordinary faith, humility and understanding. Mark draws attention to the fact that she is a Gentile (not a Jew). He wants us to feel the surprise that this unlikely non-Jewish woman has faith in Jesus' ability to heal her daughter.

7:31-37 Jesus heals a deaf and mute man. We already know that Jesus can heal all diseases and sickness, so why does Mark include another healing? Again the location is important to our understanding. Mark tells us about Jesus' journey, which occurs entirely in non-Jewish territory. Jesus is extending his work to Gentiles.

8:1-10 Does this episode feel familiar? Mark recounts this miracle of Jesus providing food in a wilderness area in a way that makes it sound just like the same event in chapter 6. It's almost identical, except for the location. Jesus is still in the Decapolis (a non-Jewish territory). The point is simple: Jesus is bringing exactly the same rescue to non-Jewish people as to the Jews.

A question that might come up:

Isn't it rude that Jesus calls the woman a dog? It would have been normal at the time for Jews to have referred to Gentiles as dogs. It was almost certainly an offensive term, however Jesus is using it almost like a test of the woman's understanding of the history of God's people. As they talk, the woman shows first that she has the humility to accept the term (and therefore her place in God's plan). However she also understands the extraordinary blessing it is to be included, and that even a 'crumb' would be enough for her. Her humility and understanding prompt Jesus to heal her daughter.

Suggested questions

Why did Jesus come?

Who is included in Jesus' rescue mission?

What does that mean for us?

How might the Syrophenician show us how to respond to Jesus?

Mark 8:11-30

Have a think about the disciples' performance so far in Mark. How would you rate them? They've had a mixture of good and bad times; they immediately followed Jesus when he called them in chapter 1, but they've also failed to understand who Jesus is (e.g. 4:41-42, 6:51-52).

In this passage we see the extent of the disciples' lack of understanding. Jesus warns the disciples about being like the Pharisees (who just want to test Jesus) and the disciples turn it into a conversation about who forgot to bring enough bread. Jesus asks them again and again if they understand; in those questions Jesus equates blindness with a lack of understanding (8:17-18). He reminds them of the two miracles where he fed a crowd in the wilderness and still they don't understand the significance (6:52).

8:22-26 Jesus heals a blind man with a more unusual, two-stage method. [See 'possible question' below.]

8:27-30 Peter correctly identifies Jesus as the Christ (8:29). This is a big moment - nobody has done this since Mark told us in verse one of chapter one that this is who Jesus is. But how has Peter suddenly been able to understand who Jesus is? Only a few moments ago he was in the boat with the disciples arguing about loaves of bread. If lack of understanding is a type of blindness, then Jesus is the one who can open blind eyes, i.e. give understanding, just as he opened the blind man's eyes in 8:22-26.

A question that might come up:

Why does Jesus take two attempts to heal the blind man? Given all that we've seen so far in Mark's gospel about Jesus' extraordinary power over sickness and even death, it can't be the case that Jesus is just having an 'off' day. Rather the more physical way that Jesus heals the man, by laying his hands on his eyes, draws attention to the fact that Jesus is the one who is 'opening' the man's blind eyes. Given that this miracle is related to the issue of understanding, the two stages may also explain why the disciples don't understand everything at once – they understand things in stages.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

How do we know that Peter is correct?

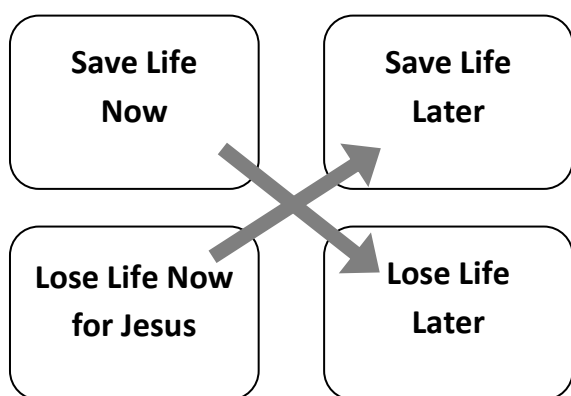
What does that mean for us?

How can anyone know who Jesus is?

Mark 8:31-38

Jesus teaches the disciples about what it means for him to be the Christ, God's anointed King. The thing that surprises them is that Jesus says he must suffer and die. Peter is so shocked by this news that he starts to tell Jesus that he's wrong. Do you have any sympathy for Peter's reaction? Jesus doesn't seem to, and responds equally strongly by rebuking Peter and calling him Satan. Peter's mistake is clearly serious.

Jesus begins to spell out what is required of those who want to follow him. His followers must give up their whole life to follow Jesus, just as he will give up his life as their King. Jesus spells out the options in 8:35, making it clear that the choice you make now has consequences later. He pushes the logic to its limit by asking whether it would be worth gaining 'the whole world' now if you forfeit your soul in the future. The consequences of being ashamed of Jesus now become even clearer in 8:38, where Jesus makes it clear that he will be ashamed of those people when he returns.



Suggested questions

Why did Jesus come?

What does Jesus say will happen to him? Why is it shocking?

What does that mean for us?

What does Jesus demand of those who would follow him?

Why is it worth following Jesus now?

Mark 9:1-29

Jesus has just made a huge demand of his followers – that they must follow his pattern of self-denying death, knowing that there is the promise of life in the future. Mark now gives us three episodes to help us have confidence in what Jesus has just said.

9:1-10 We (along with three of the disciples) see a glimpse of Jesus' future power. It's quite different to the image of Jesus being the Christ who must suffer and die. It's clearly a supernatural event, with unearthly white clothing, clouds, God's voice from heaven, and the appearance of two key figures from the Old Testament. Jesus really will be raised to life after he dies.

9:11-13 The disciples are discussing what has been written about Elijah and the Son of Man. Jesus explains that the pattern of suffering first, as written about in the Old Testament, happened to Elijah, so we should expect what was written about Jesus to happen too. He really will suffer and die.

9:14-29 The disciples are unable to cast out a particularly bad demon; only Jesus is able. The language in 9:26-27 shows that the boy appeared dead and Jesus 'raised' him to life. Jesus is the one with the power to raise people; our response should be to believe in him, like the boy's father did.

A question that might come up:

Why does Jesus say about the demon that 'this sort can't be driven out by anything but prayer'? It's not that there's anything different about this demon. Jesus' point is that the disciples should have prayed, because they don't have the power to drive it out. Only Jesus does, which is why he didn't pray when he healed the boy. Jesus is highlighting that the disciples did not believe in Jesus when they tried to get rid of the demon.

Suggested questions

Why did Jesus come?

What do we learn about what will happen to Jesus?

What does that mean for us?

How does God tell us to respond to Jesus?

What do you find interesting about the father's response to Jesus?

Mark 9:30-50

Jesus continues to teach his disciples about what it looks like to follow him. He tells them again that he is going to be killed, but they immediately start a conversation about which one of them is the greatest (9:34)! Their timing seems inconsiderate to say the least. Jesus explains what it looks like to be truly great; it means being last of all and servant of all (9:35).

Jesus immediately illustrates his point by welcoming a child (9:36). Children were of low status in society; Jesus is showing the disciples that when he says they must be a servant of all he really means everyone, even those who are considered to be the very least (9:37).

The rest of the passage explores what it means to consider yourself to be last of all and servant of all. The focus is on relationships with other followers of Jesus, whether it's those who are doing things in Jesus' name (9:38), those who do things to serve you (9:41), or young believers (9:42). Following Jesus is about a radical way of life that puts others before yourself.

Some questions that might come up:

Is Jesus serious when he says we should cut our hand off? Yes and no. Jesus wants us to take sin this seriously. Imagine a game of 'would you rather?' where the options are 'cut your hand off' or 'spend eternity in hell'. You'd rather cut your hand off, which tells us something about how awful hell must be, and the actions we should take to avoid going there. But no, Jesus doesn't want us to cut off our limbs – it doesn't actually solve the problem of sin which, from chapter 7, we know is a problem in our hearts.

What do verses 49 and 50 mean? The overall message of the Bible is clear, and we are able to understand nearly all of it with real clarity. However there are some verses that are genuinely difficult to understand. People have different ideas about what these two verses mean. Whatever the right answer is, it's still possible for us to understand the big idea of Jesus teaching in this section without understanding every detail of these specific verses.

Suggested questions

Why did he come?

What do we learn about what will happen to Jesus?

What does that mean for us?

Are you surprised by the disciple's behaviour? Why/Why not?

What might it look like today to be 'last of all and servant of all'?

Mark 10:1-31

Can you be good enough to get into Jesus' kingdom?

Some religious leaders want to know if divorce is 'lawful'. They're referring to the Jewish law that was given to them in the Old Testament. Jesus shows that the law about divorce was a concession given to them because of their sinful behaviour. Jesus' point is that even if their actions are within the bounds of the law, they still fall short of God's perfect standards.

Jesus meets a man who wants to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. The man seems to have kept all the commandments that Jesus reminds him about! But Jesus asks one more thing of him: to give up his wealth. He's unable to do it and walks away from Jesus. Jesus teaches that it's difficult to get into the kingdom of God; in fact, it's impossible! As impossible as getting a camel through the eye of a needle.

The disciples are amazed that this man won't get into the kingdom – he's kept God's law, he's respectable, and his wealth would have looked like a sign of God's blessing on him. If he can't get in then how will anyone else make the grade? Jesus' reply helps us to see that it all depends on God, not us; God can make the impossible possible.

Getting into the kingdom isn't about your performance; Jesus teaches that it's about receiving the kingdom, in the same way that a child receives anything that you give them (10:13-16).

A question that might come up:

Is Jesus saying that divorce is a sin? Personal circumstances can make this a difficult passage to study. The focus in this passage is primarily on the Pharisees attitude to the Bible's teaching about divorce. Jesus *is* teaching us something about divorce but this passage is not everything that the Bible has to say about marriage and divorce. If there is a particular issue that this passage raises for you or your friend then the best thing to do is to speak to your small group leader or church leader.

Suggested questions

Why did he come?

Who does Jesus say the kingdom is for?

What does that mean for us?

What does Jesus think about people's efforts to be good enough for his kingdom?

What promises does Jesus make for his followers?

Mark 10:32-52

Jesus continues to teach about his death and what it means to follow him. This time when he predicts his death the details are more specific and focus on the humiliating treatment that Jesus will receive. This death will look weak and shameful (10:34). The disciples however are still after the glory; James and John want the best seats when Jesus is in glory. They're still interested in being the greatest. Jesus teaches them that glory and greatness are about being a servant and slave of everyone. This style of leadership is in direct contrast to the way that the world exercises authority (10:42-43).

10:45 This verse explains why Jesus must die; this is how he rescues his people. His life is the ransom, or price, that must be paid so that many people can be rescued. The disciples' extraordinary failure to be able to do what Jesus asks shows that this rescue is essential.

Bartimaeus' reaction to Jesus is the opposite to the disciples. He knows what he needs – mercy from Jesus – and cries out to Jesus to meet those needs (10:47). He's not expecting glory and honour, but humbly relies on Jesus for the help he desperately needs. The moment that Jesus heals him, Bartimaeus begins to follow him (10:52). He is the model example of discipleship.

Suggested questions

Why did Jesus come?

What will Jesus' death be like?

What do we learn about the purpose of Jesus' death?

What does that mean for us?

What does it look like to follow Jesus?

In what ways is Bartimaeus a good example for us?

Mark 11:1-25

We see the deliberate way that Jesus is heading towards Jerusalem, the very place where he has predicted he'll be condemned and killed. Jesus is in control of every detail, and even knows what people will say to the disciples when they go to get a colt for him to ride (11:3). The crowds recognise who Jesus is – the king bringing in the kingdom (11:9-10). They also seem to understand his mission; 'Hosanna' means 'save' or 'save us'. Jesus is a king who brings salvation (11:9).

When Jesus reaches Jerusalem the focus turns to the temple. Jesus won't stand for hypocritical behaviour in the temple. Jesus is also a king who brings judgment. His treatment of the temple traders is a shadow of a greater judgement that will fall on the temple.

All of this action in the temple happens between two episodes with a fig tree. Jesus' interaction with the fig tree is an illustration of his treatment of the temple. Jesus curses the fig tree for not having any fruit when it looked leafy. The temple looks busy from a distance, but up close is similarly 'fruitless'.

Peter seems to be extremely concerned that the fig tree has withered (11:21). Has he made a connection with Jesus' treatment of the temple? Jesus' answer to Peter focuses on the possibility of a relationship with God outside of the temple system; this would have been incredible news to a Jewish person at the time, whose religious activity would have been focused around the temple.

Some questions that might come up:

Isn't Jesus being harsh on the fig tree? Jesus is using the fig tree to teach the disciples (and us) an important lesson, so we don't need to feel too sorry for it.

Is Jesus saying that I'll be given anything that I pray for? Jesus wants us to have confidence that prayer really works, even without a temple. In 11:25 Jesus expects those prayers to involve forgiving others and asking for forgiveness from God, rather than a shopping list of worldly requests. This section of Mark is not the only passage of the Bible that talks about prayer. It would be unwise to take 11:24 out of context, and expect God to give us a Ferrari just because we've prayed for one.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What do the crowds recognise about Jesus as he enters Jerusalem?

Why did he come?

What is Jesus' verdict of what is happening in the temple?

What does that mean for us?

Why is 11:22-25 good news for anyone who wants to have a relationship with God?

Mark 11:27-12:27

Jesus is still in the temple and the religious leaders want to talk to him. (This isn't surprising given that he's just turned out all the temple traders – see 11:15). They approach Jesus with questions about his authority (11:27-33), politics (12:13-17) and theology (12:18-27). Their motive is to trap Jesus (12:13). In each episode Jesus answers with a question of his own, which highlights the hypocrisy or ignorance of those asking the question.

Is it all just healthy religious debate? Can we commend the scribes for their rigorous investigation into the claims of Jesus?

The parable (12:1-12) gives us the insight we need into what's really going on. In the story the vineyard owner is God, the tenants are the religious leaders and the son is Jesus. The Pharisees understand this; they know that the parable is about them (12:12). And they also understand that in the story they are the bad guys who knowingly kill the owner's son to try and get the vineyard for themselves. Their questions to Jesus are more sinister than just rigorous debate; they won't admit it but they know who Jesus is and where his authority comes from, and their intention is to get rid of him.

We learn in the parable that the owner will 'destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others'. Rejecting God's son, as the religious leaders are doing, has serious consequences.

A question that might come up:

How do we know that the vineyard in the parable is referring to Israel? Several times in the Old Testament God spoke about the nation of Israel, describing them using the poetic language of a vineyard. He describes himself as the owner, and describes the good works of the people as the fruit. A Jewish reader of Mark's gospel, who was familiar with these passages, would have known what Jesus was referring to. If you want to read one of these Old Testament passages you could look up Isaiah 5:1-7.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What do we learn about Jesus' authority?

Why did he come?

How does Jesus respond to hypocritical religious questions?

What does that mean for us?

Why is it good news for us that the vineyard owner (God) will give the vineyard to 'others'?

Mark 12:28-44

What makes the scribe in 12:28-34 different to the others who've been talking to Jesus? It's hard to tell but he seems to be coming to Jesus with a better attitude than the other scribes. Notice that Jesus gives him a straight answer to his question (which he doesn't do when people are trying to trap him). This scribe seems to understand that there's more to a relationship with God than empty sacrifices; what really matters is the heart. Jesus affirms the scribe's response – he's close! But he's not quite there. What's missing from his understanding? Perhaps he's missed that Jesus is the Lord – greater than David, and the Lord who will bring judgement to God's enemies (12:36).

What does a heartfelt relationship with God look like? Certainly not like the scribes; their lives are full of hypocrisy. Even their prayers are only made for pretence (12:40). They will face God's judgement for the way they've behaved (12:40).

Jesus watches people giving money to the temple treasury. Lots of wealthy people are giving large sums of money, but Jesus knows that they're just giving out of what they feel they have to spare (12:44). In contrast a widow gives everything to God. She's a model of discipleship, not because she gives money, but because of her attitude as she does it; she gives everything to God – her whole life – the very thing that the scribe described as being most important in 12:33.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What do we learn about Jesus being the 'Lord'? (Hint: Look at the quote in 12:36)

What does that mean for us?

What things has the 'good' scribe got right in 12:38-44?

What can we learn from the widow's actions?

Mark 13:1-37

The focus again is on the temple. In this section of Mark we get more detail about the events surrounding the destruction of the temple, and why it is significant.

Jesus predicts that the temple will be destroyed (13:2), and the disciples ask about when it will happen and what will be the sign that it's about to happen (13:4). Jesus talks to the disciples about things that might feel like the end of the world – but repeatedly tells them that those things are not the end, and they're to “keep going”. Everything changes in verse 14. Jesus is clear that when they see ‘the abomination of desolation’ they are to flee. It is the sign that something terrible is about to happen (13:19-20).

However there's something more that is going to happen after that terrible event. Jesus explains that after that tribulation the Son of Man he will return (13:26).

Jesus tells two stories to help us understand the right response to this news. The first is about a fig tree; when you see the leaves you know that the next thing to happen is summer (13:28). In the same way, when you see the temple destroyed you know that the next thing to happen is Jesus returning (13:29). There is nothing else on the agenda between those two events. The next story is about a master going away and leaving his servants in charge (13:34); they don't know when he'll return. In the same way, Jesus' return could happen at any time, so we need to be ready.

This passage helps us to be certain that Jesus will one day return to earth, and encourages us to be ready and ‘awake’.

A question that might come up:

It never actually says that the temple will be destroyed – how do we know that's what Jesus is talking about? We know from history that the temple was actually destroyed in AD70, in circumstances similar to those described in 13:14-23. Jesus is answering a specific question from the disciples about the timing of the destruction of the temple so it makes sense that it's part of his answer.

Suggested questions

Why did he come?

Why might Jesus want his followers to be certain that one day he'll return?

What does that mean for us?

How does Jesus want his followers to respond to the news that he will return?

How do the stories of the fig tree and the master help us to respond to this news?

Mark 14:1-25

Two dinners, two lessons about Jesus' death.

A woman comes to Jesus and pours an expensive jar of perfume over his head. It's the equivalent of pouring more than a hundred cases of Moët down the kitchen sink. Some think it's a waste – better to give the money to the poor! Maybe we have some sympathy with them, but Jesus says that she has done a beautiful thing (14:6). In fact, what she's done will be told to people wherever the gospel is proclaimed (14:9); she has treated Jesus' death as something precious, and Jesus commends her for it.

Notice the contrast to the behaviour of the chief priests and Judas, who are plotting to kill Jesus for their own gains (14:10).

The second dinner is a Passover meal that Jesus eats with his disciples. During the meal Jesus reveals to them that one of the disciples will betray him (14:18). Jesus knows who it is, but the disciples seem bewildered.

Jesus teaches that this special meal is really pointing to the meaning of his death (14:22). The Passover meal pointed back to the rescue achieved by God through the sacrificial death of a lamb. Jesus is explaining that his death will also be a sacrifice that achieves an even greater rescue for God's people.

We can see why the woman's outlandish response to Jesus' death was so appropriate. Jesus will die as a sacrifice so that others don't have to. What is a death like that worth to his followers?

Suggested questions

Why did he come?

What do we learn about Jesus' death?

What does that mean for us?

Why do you think the woman's response to Jesus is appropriate?

Mark 14:26-72

Jesus predicts that the disciples will all fall away. Jesus is the shepherd who will be struck. The disciples are the sheep who will be scattered (14:27). This prediction is what we see being played out in the rest of the section. Peter and the disciples are defiant in the face of Jesus' prediction (14:29), which makes their downfall even more heart-breaking.

Throughout the chapter we see that Jesus is resolute in the way that he heads to his death. He is in control at every step (see e.g. 14:42); during the 'trial' put on by the chief priests he is the one who has to provide the evidence that they want to be able to condemn him (14:62). This resolute attitude doesn't mean that Jesus is doing an easy thing; when Jesus is praying in the garden he is distressed and sorrowful (14:33-34). He asks God to 'take away this cup' (14:36). The cup is a description that the Bible uses for all of God's punishment for people who have rejected him. Jesus knows how hard this will be, but he willingly takes it so that those who believe in him don't have to face God's right anger.

In stark contrast are the disciples, who show no resolve whatsoever. They fall asleep (14:37), run away (14:50-52), and eventually Peter denies that he ever knew Jesus (14:71). When he realises what he has done he breaks down and weeps (14:72). There is a glimmer of hope in 14:28 when Jesus hints that he'll see them in Galilee after all this has happened, but first we have to watch as they all fall away, exactly as Jesus predicted.

Suggested questions

Why did he come?

What do we learn about why Jesus must die?

What does that mean for us?

What do we learn about the disciple's ability to follow Jesus?

Mark 15:1-39

One of the big themes of this passage is that Jesus is the King. However most of the people in this section who identify Jesus this way are actually mocking him. Pilate describes Jesus as 'this man you call King of the Jews' as if its not really true. The solidiers mock him by bowing down to him and saluting him. The people watching shout at him; they think that as Jesus dies on the cross that he is a failure (15:31-32).

This death, however, is no meaningless tragedy. Jesus has explained to us that his death will be the ransom that rescues others. We see a picture of that as Pilate decides which of his two prisoners to release. Jesus is innocent, and Pilate knows it. Barabbus is guilty of murder – he's a rebel. But the crowd force Pilate to release Barabbus (15:11). The guilty person goes free, because the innocent one has taken his place. This is the good news of what Jesus death achieves for all those who trust in him.

Two more events help us see that Jesus' death is not a failure. The first is the supernatural darkness (15:33). Darkness in the Bible is often a picture of God's judgement. As Jesus dies, darkness covers the land. Jesus is taking God's judgement upon himself, just as he said he would, so that others don't have to. The second is the tearing of the curtain in the temple (15:38). A relationship with God used to be possible because of the temple system. Now that system is gone, and its possible for anyone to be part of God's kingdom; immediatly we see a Roman centurion truly recognises Jesus for who he is: the Son of God.

Suggested questions

Who is Jesus?

What is the main way that Jesus is identified in this passage?

Why did he come?

How does Jesus' death fulfil the predictions that he made?

What does Jesus' death achieve?

Mark 15:40-16:8

Was Jesus really dead? Mark wants us to be certain that he was. Joseph of Arimathea asks for the body. Pilate wants to be certain that he's really dead. He checks with a centurion, whose own life would have depended on Jesus really being dead, and gives the body to Joseph. Joseph wraps the body in linen, and burys it in a tomb. The women who watched Jesus die see exactly where he's buried.

Is anyone under the illusion that Jesus could possibly still be alive? It doesn't seem that way. The women are so convinced that he's really dead that at the first available opportunity they head to the tomb with the intention of anointing his corpse for burial. This is not what you do if you think someone is still alive.

Was Jesus really raised to life? Jesus has predicted earlier in Mark's gospel that after he died he would be raised to life, and that his disciples would see him again. When the women reach the tomb they find the stone rolled away, and a man sitting there. He knows who they're looking for and gives them the news: Jesus has risen; he is not there.

They're given specific instructions to go to the disciples with this amazing news, but instead they run away in terror. Our frustration with them leads us to ask the question: what will we do with this news?

A question that might come up:

We don't actually see Jesus risen – can I really believe that its true based on this evidence? Mark seems to think he's given us enough evidence for his purposes. However his isn't the only eye witness account of the risen Jesus. You can also read about it in Matthew, Luke and John's gospel, and in the book of Acts, which all give us more detail about what Jesus did after he was raised to life.

Suggested questions

Why did Jesus come?

Can we trust the things that Jesus said about himself?

Why do you think the young man who speaks to the women singles out Peter in his message?

What does that mean for us?

What do you think the women should have done?

A QUICK GUIDE TO EXODUS

Exodus is a book in the Bible that tells the story of God rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt.

It is the defining moment of the nation of Israel. They remember the event every year at the Passover. In the Bible one of the most common ways for God to describe his character is to remind the people of this event.

As well as telling us about something that God has done in the past, the story of Exodus points forward to the type of rescue that God would perform to rescue his people from all nations for all time.

The whole book of Exodus is very easy to read, but if you want to start with the reader's digest highlights, have a look at the following sections:

2:1-22 Moses' rescue as a baby, and escape from Egypt as a young man.

3:13-15 Moses meets God in the burning bush. God reveals that his name is 'I AM.'

6:1-9 God promises that he will rescue his people and that they will have a relationship with him.

7:1-7 God tells Moses what to say to Pharaoh.

12:29-42 God rescues the people from Egypt.

14:1-31 God makes it possible for the people to cross the Red Sea to escape the Egyptians.

16:1-21 God provides bread from heaven when his people are in the wilderness.

20:1-21 God gives the 10 commandments

32:1-35 The people fail to live as God has asked by making a Golden Calf to worship.

33:12-23 Moses pleads for the people and gets a glimpse of God's glory on the mountain.

EXODUS

SLAVERY



MOSES



BURNING BUSH



PHAROAH



10 PLAGUES

9. DARKNESS
10. DEATH

BREAD FROM HEAVEN



WILDERNESS



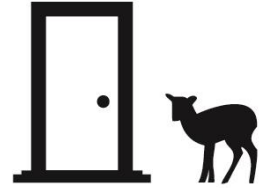
CROSSING RED SEA



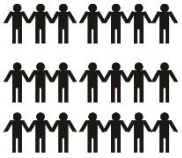
EXODUS



PASSOVER



ORGANISING THE PEOPLE



MOUNT SINAI



10 COMMANDMENTS



TABERNACLE



CLOUD / GOD'S GLORY



GLOSSARY

Abomination of Desolation A sacrilegious event in the temple

Apostles 12 disciples of Jesus specifically appointed by him

Baptise/Baptism Ritual involving water, symbolising cleansing

Beelzebul Name for the Devil

Blaspheming Claiming to be God when you are not

Caesar Roman ruler at the time

Commandments God's rules in the Old Testament

Covenant Promise

Crucify/Crucifixion Put someone to death by nailing to a cross

Cup Symbolic picture of God's judgement and wrath against rebellious nations

David Great king of Israel, around 1000 BC

Defile Make religiously unclean

Demons Evil spirits

Denarius/Denarii Coin worth a day's wages for a labourer

Disciples Genuine follower of Jesus

Doctrines Religious teaching on a particular topic

Elders Religious leaders

Elect God's chosen people

Elijah Famous Old Testament prophet

Feast of Unleavened Bread 7 day festival immediately following the Passover

Gentile Person who is not Jewish

Gospel Momentous news!

Hell Place of eternal punishment

Herodians A political group that supported King Herod and opposed Jesus

Holy One of God Name used by Demons and unclean spirits to address Jesus

Holy Spirit God's spirit

Hosanna "God saves"

House of God See 'temple'

Isaiah A *prophet* in the Old Testament who spoke about Jesus

Israel The nation of the *Jews*; God's people

Jews God's people in the Old Testament

John the Baptist A prophet who announced Jesus' arrival

King Herod **Jewish** caretaker King under the Roman authorities

Kingdom of God Where God's King (see 'Christ') reigns

Lawful Within the commandments of God

Leper/Leprosy Somebody suffering from a skin disease

Moses Famous leader of Israel in the Old Testament

Myrrh Aromatic herb used for incense or perfume

Parable A story with a meaning

Passover Jewish celebration remembering Israel's rescue from slavery in Egypt

Passover Lamb Central part of the Passover meal

Pharisees Jewish religious leaders renowned for exceptional observance of the law and commandments

Pilate Roman administrative official over the area of Judea

Prayer Speaking to God

Priest Responsible for making sacrifices in the temple

Prince of Demons Another name for the Devil

Prophet Somebody who brings a message spoken by God

Rabbi A Jewish religious teacher

Repentance To turn around and live in a new way

Resurrection Physically returning to life from death

Sabbath Religious day of rest

Sadducees Jewish religious group who don't believe in an afterlife

Satan Another name for the Devil, God's main enemy

Scribes Experts on the Old Testament

Scriptures A word for the Bible; Jesus often uses this word to refer to the *prophets*

Sin Not loving God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength

Son of David Heir of the royal line of King *David*

Son of Man A name in the Bible for God's all-powerful, everlasting worldwide ruler

Synagogue A Jewish place of worship

Syrophoenician Somebody from the non-Jewish region of Syrophenicia

Temple Most important Jewish religious building in Jerusalem; Place where God met with his people

The Twelve See 'Apostles'

Transfigured Visibly changed

Tribulation A time of great suffering

Unclean Spirit Demonic spirit possessing someone who isn't a Christian

ISRAEL & SURROUNDING AREA

KEY LOCATIONS IN MARK'S GOSPEL

 NON-JEWISH TERRITORY

