

THE
GOSPEL
OF
MARK

2017 STUDY NOTES
PART 3

Getting Started

Remember to start and finish with prayer.

to kick off...

1. What are some things that those who belong to Jesus differ on?

read Mark 3:7-12 below

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

2. What does it mean for Jesus to be the Son of God? (refer to study 1)

3. Why do you think Jesus gave the evil spirits strict orders not to tell who he was?

read Mark 3:13-19 below

Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons. 16 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

4. Why is Jesus choosing 12 disciples subversive?

Interesting to note that of the apostles' job description here, only the task of being with him is unique to them - the Gerasene demoniac is told to preach (5:19-20) and others successfully cast out demons in Jesus' name (9:38-39).

5. Why is it so important that the apostles be with Jesus?

read Mark 3:20-35 below

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

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

23 So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. 28 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin."

30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit."

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

33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked.

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

6. What is the effect of sandwiching the story of Jesus' exchange with the teachers of the law (22-30) in the middle of the story concerning Jesus and his family (20-21 & 31-35)?

7. Why do you think the teachers of the law say Jesus is possessed by Beelzebub?

8. What is Jesus' parable about?

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

To blaspheme the Holy Spirit is to spitefully deny the activity of God's Spirit in the ministry of Jesus. While Jesus condemns such blasphemy as an eternal and unforgivable sin, we need to be sensitive to Jesus' use of hyperbole here, and note that he also says - "All the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them". As such, it is not unreasonable to infer from Jesus here that the gospel proclaims that God forgives what may seem to us to be unforgivable. Accordingly, God is willing to forgive any blasphemy, the only thing he cannot forgive is a continual state of spurning the Spirit's work. This means that anyone worried about whether or not they have committed the unforgivable sin, needs to hear afresh Jesus' words - "all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them" so "Repent and believe!" (Mark 1:16)

Read Ephesians 1:3-10 below and note the following question

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in

his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. 9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

9. What is God's will?

10. How might someone do God's will? As they do this, what does that make them according to Jesus? (Mark 2:35)

to finish off...

11. What dangers do those who belong to Jesus face in holding different opinions?

12. How should we handle conflict in those differences?

Pray

... for the link missionary and church ministry your growth group has adopted for this term.

Getting Started

Remember to start and finish with prayer.

to kick off...

1. Who do you know is the least likely to become a Christian? Why?

Read Mark 4:1-20 below

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

9 *Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."*

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

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

13 *Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time.*

When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown.”

2. What distinguishes those given ‘the secret of the kingdom of God’ from those ‘on the outside’ in verse 11?

3. What do you think is the purpose of Jesus’ parables?

When Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6:9-10 in verse 12, one gets the impression he understands his use of parables as a means of making it more difficult for people to understand the truth. Understandably this has troubled many as it seems contrary to what we might expect of Jesus. However the context in Isaiah is helpful. There, God tells the prophet to preach in spite of warning him in advance that it will only harden the hearts of his hearers until judgement befalls them. There is irony and scorn in this command - that people don’t or won’t get it when they really should and it has to take death and destruction for them to finally understand. So too here with Jesus, that people just don’t or won’t get what he’s on about until death and destruction are upon them - namely the death of the Son of God and the destruction of Jerusalem.

4. What do you think it means to “hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop”?

5. What do the threefold ‘crops’ indicate about discipleship?

think it through

6. How do you measure successful evangelism?

7. What kind of soil do you think you are? Why?

8. How might we avoid being a bad soil?

Read Mark 4:21-25 below

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

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

9. In what way is the parable of the measure referring to the parable of the lamp?

Read Mark 4:26-33 below

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

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

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

10. What is the kingdom of God? (cf Mark 1:14-15)

11. What does the parable of a man scattering seed on the ground tell us about how people come into the kingdom of God?

12. What does the parable of the mustard seed tell us about the kingdom of God?

13. What popular idea at the time might these parables be a corrective to?

think out through

14. How might the proverb “a man reaps what he sows” be applied to Jesus’ teaching here?

15. Give some examples of what it might look like for us to sow the word of God?

16. What should we be mindful of as we sow?

Pray

... for the link missionary and church ministry your growth group has adopted for this term.