

An Interactive Journey through Mark

By Philip Keck

All quotations are from the ESV

Introduction

Welcome to *An Interactive Journey through Mark*! This workbook will help guide you and your group through the entire Gospel according to Mark. If you go over one section a week, this workbook will last a little more than half of a year. There are several goals I pray will be accomplished through this study. Two of the primary goals come from Jesus' response to a scribe when He was asked what the most important commandment is. Jesus answered:

1. To "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."
2. To "love your neighbor as yourself."

I pray this workbook will help you to grow in these areas.

In addition, I pray that as you study with your group and this workbook, you will also develop certain Bible study skills including:

1. Using free tools to help with word studies (these can be found in lesson 22)
2. Using parallel passages and chiasms to enhance meaning and illuminate understanding
3. Seeing how the story of the Bible connects, and finds its fulfillment in the Gospel

Finally, I pray that you will be able to disciple one another during this time. Hopefully you have a leader who can begin guiding your group as you progress through this book. As you become more comfortable with how this book operates, I encourage you to try leading lessons on your own. As you are poured into, look to pour into others. As you are discipled, look to disciple others.

Each week this workbook will focus on a section of Mark's Gospel account. Other passages from the Old Testament, Paul's letters, or other sections of Mark will also be included. I encourage you to read each week's central passages from Mark often.

In addition, each lesson has questions to answer that will help you meditate on the text. Several of the questions simply ask for observations or questions you have. Meditate on the passages and the questions while you consider them. It is perfectly fine not to have the answers as you read through Mark.

However, when you come together, share your responses, questions, and thoughts with one another. Perhaps someone else may have an answer. Perhaps the question you have will be answered in a later section. Perhaps the question is something God wants you to dwell on, and He will reveal something about it later.

Do not just settle for easy answers. Wrestle with the text. Wrestle with it by yourself, and wrestle with it together as a group. Consider it deeply. Sometimes parts of the Biblical message will be illuminated with new clarity. Other times new categories will be created that can be filled in as you continue to learn about God. Some things will be confusing and require meditation and discussion to understand.

Throughout this workbook I have chosen to focus on some features of Mark's Gospel account rather than others. If your group chooses to ask questions or focus on things not elaborated on in this book, that is perfectly fine. Remember the overall goals as you disciple one another: growing in love for God and growing in love for your neighbor.

You will also see numerous charts throughout this workbook. Study and fill them out as best you can, and share your charts with your group. The charts can help us compare and contrast different passages, which in turn can help us grow in our understanding of who Jesus is, and who we are as His church.

Throughout this book I will be pointing out chiasms I believe exist. These can help us meditate on the messages of Mark by giving us similar passages to compare and contrast. Feel free to disagree with the specifics of the chiasms that are pointed out in this workbook. The point is not recognizing or even agreeing on the presence and location of these chiasms. Rather, the point is developing different techniques to read and reread parts of the Bible to compare and contrast different sections, which can result in the illumination of different ideas, present different levels of meaning, and, hopefully, make the entire process more enjoyable.

Finally, as you read, remember that the goal is not to just get to the end of a passage. Rather, the goal is to understand the passage. This will require reading and rereading a passage in order to analyze all the details that the authors include, asking questions about the texts, and searching for answers.

A Story in Six Parts

The Bible tells one unified story that leads to Jesus, and it is beneficial to have sections for understanding the story. One way to organize the Bible is below, along with the corresponding books commonly found in English Protestant Bibles.

1. This chart offers six categories with which to consider the story of the Bible. The top row is the category, the second row are the sections of the Bible connected to that category. Use the third row to write down any thoughts you have about these categories.

Creation	Rebellion	God's rescue Mission through the Family of Abraham	The Promised Messiah	The Church	End times (eschatology)
Genesis 1 and 2	Genesis 3-11	Genesis 12 through the book of Malachi	Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John	Acts through Jude	Revelation
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Promise of land and descendants -Exile in Egypt, redemption and liberation by God -Testing in the wilderness -Crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land -Kingdom of Israel -Era of the divided monarchy -Warnings from the prophets, exile, promise of a Messiah 			

*For additional information about this, listen to the *Bible Reset Podcast*, Episode 14: “Genesis to Revelation – The 6 Act Story of the Bible”

The Bible tells the story of God and His creation. God creates a good world for His creation, but soon rebellion comes. The rebellion starts in Genesis 3 with a mysterious talking serpent convincing Adam and Eve to not place their trust in God, which leads to their exile from Eden. The rebellion continues until the scattering of the nations in Genesis 11. Yet God still loves the world. So what is He going to do? We find the answer in Genesis 12: He will work through one family, Abraham, to redeem and bless all the nations of the world.

However, another problem soon arises: Abraham’s family is just as rebellious as the rest of mankind! The Old Testament then tells the story of a family given a promise, and ending up enslaved in Egypt. That family is subsequently liberated by their God, tested in the wilderness (in which they routinely fail and rebel), and yet they are still brought to the promised land. As the Old Testament continues, we see more struggles of Abraham’s family, and out of those struggles a kingdom is established: Israel. This kingdom does not last long as a unified state, and continues rebelling against God.

The kingdom splits into two kingdoms, the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The northern kingdom does poorly and is eventually handed over to the Assyrians. The kingdom of Judah does slightly better, but it still continually rebels and is handed over into exile to Babylon.

This seems to present a complication to God’s original solution to reconcile with humanity: How will God “bless the nations” through the family of Israel, if they have been conquered by the nations?

The answer to this question comes from the prophets. Before, during, and just after the first Jewish people return from exile, God sends prophets who continually write about a promised Messiah, a branch from the line of David, who will redeem His people. However, at the end of the Old Testament, even though a portion of the family of Israel has returned to the promised land, the Messiah has not appeared. The two primary questions of the Old Testament:

1. How will God reconcile His people to Him?
2. How will God reconcile all of mankind to Him?

are still left unanswered. In fact, 400 years passed after the first people began returning from exile, and the promised Messiah still had not arrived. Where was He?

It is at this point of the story that the Gospel accounts begin. In fact, Matthew summarizes the entire story of Israel through his genealogy, from Abraham to the hope the Messiah represents (Matthew 1:1-17). Matthew starts his genealogy with Abraham, who received the **Promise**, and then continues to David, who is the most successful king of the **Kingdom** of Israel (Matthew 1:6). The genealogy continues, and eventually heads to the **Exile** (Matthew 1:11). This is when the **Promise** of a branch that will restore the kingdom is developed, and that is the direction Matthew's genealogy goes as it approaches its climax: "...Jesus was born, who is called Christ." Christ is the Greek word for Messiah, which means anointed one: Jesus is the branch, the anointed one, who will inaugurate a new **Kingdom** without an **Exile**.

Lesson 1: Mark 1:1-13

In around 9 BC, several years before Jesus' birth, the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus had a birthday message sent throughout his Empire which stated several things:

1. Caesar Augustus' appearance "has exceeded the hopes of all good news"
2. "There is no hope that anyone in the future would surpass him"
3. "The birthday of the god [a title Caesar Augustus gave himself] was the beginning of his good news"

The word "good news" is the Greek word, *euangelia*, which is translated as "Gospel" in English. Scholars are divided on whether or not Mark had Caesar Augustus' birthday message in mind when he started his Gospel account, but there are many interesting parallels between the two.

1. First of all, read Mark 1:1-13. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Use the Footnotes in Your Bible

One skill to develop in order to better understand the Bible is to use footnotes to find and then read references from the Old Testament. This is especially important if the author felt it necessary to actually quote that passage from the Old Testament. Mark 1:2-3 references something prophesied in Isaiah (and Malachi), which is clearly important for Mark to include here, and we should examine what he is referencing.

When we read those passages it is important to not just read the line that is being referenced, but to try to read enough of the context in order to understand the reference.

Sometimes that is reading just a section, while other times it will require reading an entire chapter or more. When this workbook suggests certain verses to read, it is perfectly fine to read more verses. However, be aware that when reading additional verses, additional questions can

arise. Those questions may not be answered in this book, but answers will come to light through further reading and study.

In this instance, there are two passages we should look up as Mark reminds readers of the Messianic herald, which is the idea that someone would come before the Messiah in order to announce his arrival. Mark does this by referring to this concept first developed by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 40:3) and he also quotes from another prophet, Malachi (Malachi 3:1), as well (it is interesting to note that these two quotes come the first major prophet, Isaiah, and the final minor prophet, Malachi, symbolically wrapping around the entire message of the prophets). It may seem weird that Mark writes: "As it is written in Isaiah the prophet..." and then immediately quotes Malachi (whose name actually means "messenger"), but this was an acceptable practice at the time. Let's start by reading Malachi 2:17-3:5.

*"Major" and "minor" refers to the length of the books the prophets wrote, not their importance

2. Read Malachi 2:17-3:5. As you read, think about these questions: For whom is the messenger preparing the way? What other observations or questions do you have from this passage?

Now let's examine Isaiah 40:1-11. Here we see a poem that directly follows a prophecy from Isaiah 39, which says that Judah will be conquered by Babylon. This is a tragic consequence of generations of sin, yet God still loves His people and is faithful to them. We can therefore infer how important it is for the next poem to begin with the idea of "comfort" for God's people. As you read these verses, note that Isaiah describes a leveling when he illustrates the way of God: "Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain shall become level".

3. After reading Isaiah 40:1-11, what do you notice? What questions do you have? What is significant about the idea of a leveling?

As you read, you may notice that some parts of the prophecies written by Isaiah and the other prophets have been fulfilled, while others have not. This is where the idea of “Already, but not yet” arises from. When Jesus came, much of the prophecy was fulfilled, but not all. The remaining elements of the prophecies will happen, but they will occur around Jesus’ second coming, which is promised by Jesus and described in Revelation. We live in a special time when we can share about God’s grace to others, before the final judgment.

A New Start

It is important to be aware of the idea that Jesus is faithfully redoing the story of humanity and the story of Israel, but He is doing it correctly and faithfully; he is succeeding where all others have failed. In fact, several key moments from Israel’s story have already been replayed in Mark 1:1-13.

4. Look at the chart below. Then fill in evidence of Jesus’ success in the column to the right.

	Humanity’s Story and Israel’s Story	Jesus’ success
Living peacefully with animals	Adam and Eve lived peacefully with the animals at the beginning of Genesis. The idea of humanity and animals peacefully coexisting is actually very rare in the Bible, but can be found in Genesis 1 and 2.	
Tempted by Satan	Adam and Eve are tempted by Satan, who is connected with the snake in the garden in	

	Revelation 12:9, 20:2, and poetically described in Ezekiel 28:13-19	
Crossing the Jordan into the promised land	Joshua is standing in the middle of the Jordan river, as described in Joshua 3. It is important to note that in Hebrew, "Joshua" is <i>Yehoshua</i> . The name "Jesus" is simply a shortened version of <i>Yehoshua</i> : <i>Yeshua</i> .	
Temptation in the wilderness	Israelites are tempted in the wilderness in the books of Exodus and Numbers. Israel fails repeatedly.	

Finally, Mark describes John the Baptist’s outfit with interesting details. Whenever a detail is mentioned in the Bible, it is probably significant (such as Jesus being with the wild animals in 1:13).

5. Read 2 Kings 1:8. Who is John the Baptist dressed like? This will be important for later when we reach Mark 9.

Lesson 2: Mark 1:14-29

This week we see Jesus call His first disciples, as well as cast out the first demon in Mark's Gospel account. Read Mark 1:14-29 carefully. Pay close attention to the details, such as that this passage starts with the arrest of John the Baptist, which plays a role later.

1. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

“Immediately”

We just read about Jesus calling his first disciples. Many people will point out that Simon, Andrew, James and John “immediately” leave their work and follow Jesus. This is true and important. However, as you read Mark's Gospel account you will see the word “immediately” (*eutheós* in Greek) occurs very often throughout it. In fact it has actually already occurred in 1:10 and 1:12. Mark uses *eutheós* 42 times throughout his book!

2. Read verses 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, and 1:20. What is happening “immediately” in each of those passages? How might this connect to Jesus' announcement in 1:15: “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel”?

God Desires to Work with People

Jesus calling people to learn from Him (and eventually share in His mission) continues an important concept that starts on the first page of the Bible: God desires to work with humans.

1. We see this in the commands He gives Adam and Eve in the garden
2. We see God wants to work with and through Abraham's family as He initiates His plan to redeem and reconcile humanity to Himself
3. We see it continuing today through the church

Keep this idea in mind as we read, since God also desires to work with and through *you*.

Additionally, we see the first of five Sabbaths that Mark mentions in his Gospel account. On this particular Sabbath, Jesus enters a synagogue, teaches, casts out an unclean spirit, and amazes everyone, which causes "at once [*euthéós* in Greek!] his fame [to] spread everywhere...." There are several things occurring here that we can focus on. One thing to note is Jesus is continuing to do what the Israelites were supposed to do when they entered the Promised Land.

Read Exodus 23:20-28 (you can read the rest of the passage if you would like). This passage occurs after God led His people through the Red Sea, and just after they received the Ten Commandments. There are several things to note in this passage. First of all, Exodus 23:20 is often translated as "Behold, I send an angel before you...." Does that sound familiar? How about if we change the word "angel" to "messenger", since the Hebrew word translated as "angel" is *malak* (the root word of Malachi), which actually means messenger. This is *exactly how* Mark started his quotation in Mark 1:2! (Don't get concerned about the accuracy of your English translation; "angel" is actually a perfectly appropriate translation for *malak* in Exodus 23:20). In addition, focus on Exodus 23:24. God said He would "blot out" (*kachad* in Hebrew, which can also mean to hide) the people living there. God then tells the Israelites what they are to do.

3. What five things does God command the Israelites to do in Exodus 23:24? Three of the things are prohibitions, and two are commands for the Israelites to do as God works with them.

In Exodus 23, we see that the Israelites were supposed to clean the land by “utterly overthrow[ing]” the gods of the land, and “break their pillars in pieces.” Tragically, the Israelites rebelled by routinely bowing down to the gods in Canaan, and forsaking the one, true God. In Mark 1:21-28 we again see Jesus doing what the Israelites were supposed to do: remove the unclean spirits/ “gods” from the land, and liberate it. This is important. Many Jewish people at the time thought the Messiah would come and defeat the Roman legions in order to free the land and the Jewish people. Jesus *did* come to overthrow a legion, but not the one that the people thought was oppressing them.

*For more information on this, see *The Unseen Realm* by Dr. Michael Heiser, or listen to Bible Project’s series on God.

4. How is Jesus continuing to live out the story of Israel? How is it significant that Jesus is overthrowing spiritual evil as opposed to human evil?

Chiasms

Finally, it is important to note that Mark 1:21-29 may be written as a chiasm. This is a Hebrew way of writing, in which they present a pattern of ideas that lead to a central idea. The ideas of the original pattern are then revisited in reverse order. Chiasms can be identified by seeing repeated language or ideas. It can seem simplistic, but is actually quite profound and Mark appears to use chiasms throughout his Gospel account.

A: Mark 1:21 Jesus enters the synagogue
B: Mark 1:22 Everyone is astonished because of Jesus’ authority when He teaches
C: Mark 1:23 Man with unclean spirit arrives
D: Mark 1:24-25 Unclean spirit recognizes Jesus, Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit and commands it to come out of the man
C: Mark 1:26 The unclean spirit leaves the man

B: Mark 1:27 Everyone is amazed at Jesus' teaching with authority, even the spirits obey Him!

A: Mark 1:28-29 Jesus' fame spreads and He leaves the synagogue

When you study the chiasm, the middle part, section D in this example, is sometimes referred to as the "hinge". After discovering a chiasm, we can then compare each parallel section (A with A, B with B, C with C), all through the lens of the hinge .

Note that chiasms are methods that Biblical authors used to tell stories and write poetry. They are not a Bible code, but a way to communicate and help illuminate ideas and information if we take the time to study and compare them. Ancient Biblical authors and readers were attuned to recognize and understand this style. It is similar to how we can instinctively recognize in movies when a flashback is occurring, even when dates or years are not placed on the screen.

Directors use certain techniques and patterns that we are trained to recognize that indicate a flashback has begun. A chiasm would operate the same way to an ancient audience.

*Note that every time we will read Scripture from the Old Testament, it is essentially a flashback into the Biblical story

5. Study 1:21-29 with the idea of a chiasm in mind and compare the parallel sections.

Reflect on how verses 21-23 are different from verses 26-29 because of what happens in verses 24-25 (Jesus' authority is not simply as a good teacher, He *has actual power* to command unclean spirits). How can recognizing a chiasm help us understand Scripture more deeply?

Lesson 3: Mark 1:30-45

We will continue to see Jesus' liberation of humanity from sin and death in Mark 1:29-45. However, before we do that it can be helpful to read Isaiah 61:1-6. This is the passage that Jesus read from in Nazareth's synagogue before He began His ministry in Luke 4.

1. Read Isaiah 61:1-6. What will God's anointed one (the word for anointed is *mashach* which is where we get the word Messiah from) do?

Let's go back to the Mark's Gospel account. We are going to see Jesus continuing to "clean house" as He travels, teaches, casts out unclean spirits, and heals.

2. Read Mark 1:30-45. How does this passage connect to Isaiah 61:1-6?

A Second Chiasm

As you read, you may have noticed there is another chiasm between Mark 1:35-45. Examine the chiasm below and complete the rest of the table.

Chiasm Sections	Events in the Sections
A: 1:35-37 People are seeking Jesus in desolate places	Jesus is praying by himself in a dark place when Peter comes to Him and says that "Everyone is looking for you"
B: 1:38-39 Jesus gives a command to go	Jesus responds to Peter by explaining it is time to go to the "next towns".
C: 1:40-42 Jesus' will	A leper comes up to Jesus, and says: "If you will, you can make me clean".

	Jesus responds with "I will; be clean."
B: 1:43-44 Jesus gives a command to go	
A: 1:45 People are seeking Jesus in desolate places	

3. What thoughts, observations, or questions do you have regarding this chiasm?

Finally, there are several connections that can be made by comparing Jesus' casting out of the unclean spirit, and Jesus' cleansing of the leper.

4. Reread Mark 1:21-28 and Mark 1:40-45, then finish the chart

	Unclean spirit	Leper
Who they recognized Jesus to be		Simply someone who could help him
How was the person unclean?	The spirit was unclean	Unclean due to a skin disease
Jesus' response and	Jesus rebuked him, saying "Be silent, and come out of him!"	

commands		
Response to Jesus' command		
Inferences, thoughts, or wonderings		

Notice how the unclean spirit was silent after coming out of Jesus, yet the leper went around telling everyone about Jesus, even though Jesus explicitly told him not to do that. This implies that the unclean spirit was compelled to submit to the authority of Jesus, while the leper had a choice to either follow Jesus' command or to not follow His command.

5. What can we learn about ourselves, and the freedom that God has provided for us from the reaction of the demon and the reaction of the leper? How should we use this freedom?

Prayer

Finally, Jesus' actions in Mark 1:35 can be easy to overlook, but they are very important. After the Sabbath in which he cast out an unclean spirit, healed Peter's mother-in-law from illness, as well as helped "the whole city" He was in, Jesus rose "very early in the morning" to leave his companions and spend time in prayer. It is easy to imagine that Jesus is exhausted after

spending time with the entire city. The fact that after this He went to spend time alone with the Father in prayer is an important lesson for us, especially because of the hectic world in which we live. Jesus will again leave His disciples to go pray to the Father by himself in Mark 6:46.

6. Jesus spent time by himself in prayer with the Father. How would you describe your prayer life? What areas are going well? What areas could be improved? How can you grow in those areas? How can we learn from Jesus' example?

Lesson 4: Mark 2:1-22

Jesus departed from Capernaum in Mark 1:37, leaving behind people searching for Him. This week we will read about Jesus returning to Capernaum to teach people, to heal people, and to turn people to God. Remember, 1:15 says: "...repent and believe in the Gospel." The word "repent" is *metanoëó* in Greek, which means to think differently, reconsider, or figuratively to go on a different path. This passage ends with people joining Jesus in a celebratory meal, during which Jesus continues to teach about His mission.

1. Read Mark 2:1-22. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Visible Faith

One key verse from the story about the paralytic is 2:5: "And when Jesus saw their faith...". This describes the faith of the people bringing the paralytic to Jesus, and likely also the faith of the paralytic himself. As they dug a hole into the roof of the house in which Jesus was teaching, their *actions* showed their faith, their faith was visible. This is in contrast with the scribes, who after hearing Jesus say "Son, your sins are forgiven" question "in their hearts" how Jesus can forgive sins, since they know that only God can forgive sins.

2. How did the actions of the paralytic and his companions show their faith? The Scribes knew the scriptures well, yet their faith is not mentioned. What are they doing differently than the paralytic and his companions?

The second story in this section is about a wealthy man turning from his wealth in order to follow Jesus. This is the story of Levi, the tax collector (who is also called Matthew, the author of the first Gospel account in our Bibles). After calling Levi/ Matthew, Jesus attends a dinner party with him along with other “tax collectors and sinners”. This causes the scribes of the Pharisees to question why Jesus is eating with those kinds of people. Jesus’ response to them is located in Mark 2:17, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

*Having more than one name was common in the time of Jesus; think of Simon Peter or Saul/ Paul for example

In Matthew’s account of this same event, he adds an extra detail to this story: Jesus quotes from Hosea 6:6: “I desire mercy, not sacrifice.” Go and read Hosea 6:1-6, since it will help illuminate new aspects of Jesus’ message.

3. What observations or questions do you have from Hosea 6:1-6? What connections can you make to this passage and the dinner party Jesus is attending?

The Gospel Accounts Have a Backstory

Often great movies and stories will drop you straight into the action. As we meet the main characters, we realize they have intricate back stories making their motivations only partially clear at first. The world of these movies may look dirty, well-used, and lived-in. We see this in the opening shots of *Star Wars IV: A New Hope*, which presented so many questions that it subsequently spawned several prequels simply to answer those questions (and make more money).

We also see this in the Gospel accounts. They drop us into a world that is dirty, well-used, and lived-in. Like modern movies such as *Star Wars*, there is a backstory explaining the motivations and hopes of the people. The backstory of the Gospel accounts is the Old Testament, which was written by dozens of authors over a period of a thousand years, yet all consistently pointing

forward to the Gospel. Every time a person in the Gospel accounts makes a reference that seems odd or unexpected, they are referring to something that would have been familiar to people at that time and in that context. This can make fully understanding passages more difficult at times, but not impossible. Remember, we do have the Old Testament at our fingertips as well as thousands of footnotes helpfully placed in our Bibles by translators.

While at the dinner party, Jesus is asked another question about fasting, since John the Baptist's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. John the Baptist's disciples may have been fasting in hopes of freedom for John, who was arrested in 1:14, and the Pharisees may have fasted weekly or bi-weekly (as suggested in Luke 18:15).

Jesus responds by comparing being with Him to a wedding and that they are celebrating. He then provides two analogies to explain what He is doing. In order to fully understand these analogies, it helps to be aware of their Old Testament roots and to understand the concept of a covenant, to which Jesus may be cryptically hinting. A covenant is more binding than a contract and demands a close relationship between the two agreeing parties. A marriage is a good comparison for a covenant, and we see God's covenantal relationship with Israel described as a marriage often, such as in Deuteronomy 29:10-14. Deuteronomy is the end of the Torah, and is mostly a long speech from Moses. In this speech Moses is recounting the story of Israel right before he is about to pass away and Israel is to enter the promised land.

*The Torah is the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

In addition, during the exile, not only was a Messiah promised, but a new covenant was promised as well. The clearest example of this is Jeremiah 31:31-34 (this also happens to be the longest part of the Old Testament block-quoted in the New Testament, which occurs in Hebrews 8:8-12).

*Listen to *Grafted's* podcast "What is the New Covenant?" for more information about this

4. To help us understand Jesus' analogies, read Deuteronomy 29:10-14 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. Study the chart below, and finish filling it in. Write down any ideas, connections, or questions you see between what Jesus is saying at this dinner party, and the Old Testament passages.

	Eating with God	Marriage Language	Covenant Language
Jesus' Response	-You cannot fast while the bridegroom is with you -They will fast when the bridegroom is taken away -People ate and drank with God	Jesus is implying that He is the bridegroom. The bride here would be:	Analogy of the cloth and the wineskins. Jesus is sharing that something new is here, that requires new practices. This could connect to the New Covenant, which is not simply a patch for the old covenant, it requires new "skin" to contain it.
Old Testament reference	Exodus 24 The elders of Israel eat with God on Mount Sinai in celebration of their covenant with God	Deuteronomy 29:10-14	Jeremiah 31:31-34

For more passages related to the marriage (and re-marriage) that describes God's relationship with His people, you can read Hosea 2:16-23, Jeremiah 2:2, and Isaiah 62:4-5. In the New Testament, Paul also uses this language to describe the relationship with God and the church in passages such as Ephesians 5:21-33 (his mind is blown in 5:32 when he says "This mystery is profound...!"), and 2 Corinthians 11:2.

5. Keeping what we learned in this chapter in mind, what specifically is Jesus calling Levi to (and He is calling us to as well)? Share any passages, thoughts, or observations that were helpful to you in answering this question.

Lesson 5: Mark 2:23-3:6

In Mark 2:23-3:6 we see two stories about events taking place on the Sabbath. These are the second and third Sabbath stories of the five in Mark's Gospel account, and we will examine them together after the fourth Sabbath story.

1. Read Mark 2:23-3:6. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Chiasm Alert!

Whenever two similar stories occur back-to-back or near each other, it should alert us to look for a chiasm, and indeed we can find one here. Examine and complete the chart.

Chiasm Section	Events in the Chiasm
A: Mark 2:23 People going on the Sabbath	Jesus and His disciples are traveling on the Sabbath
B: Mark 2:23 The Sabbath provides life	Jesus' disciples begin to pluck and eat heads of grain
C: Mark 2:24 Question regarding the Sabbath	"Why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"-- asked by the Pharisees
D: Mark 2:25-28 Teachings about the Sabbath	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. "Think about David and his men eating the Bread of the Presence. That is not lawful for them. 2. The Sabbath is FOR man, not man for the Sabbath 3. Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath
C: Mark 3:1-4 Question regarding the Sabbath	
B: Mark 3:5 The Sabbath	

provides life	
A: Mark 3:6 People going on the Sabbath	

2. Observe the chart. Write down observations or questions that you have.

In the first story about the Sabbath, Jesus is comparing his disciples plucking and eating grains with David eating the Bread of the Presence, which is something that is lawful only for the priests to eat, and David was not a priest. This story occurs in 1 Samuel 21:1-7, during the reign of Saul, who was the first Israelite king. However, due to Saul's sin and continual disloyalty to God, David is anointed King. Saul is not pleased by this, and begins searching for David in order to kill him. At this point in the story, David and his men are on the run from Saul, and hungry due to lack of food.

3. Read the 1 Samuel 21:1-7, then complete the chart.

	1 Samuel 21:1-7	Mark 2:23-28
People involved	David and his men	Jesus and His Disciples
Food that was eaten	Bread of the Presence	

Problem	Bread of the Presence is only for the priests to eat	
Forces opposing the people involved	Saul, and Doeg the Edomite	

You may notice that Jesus refers to the “time of Abiathar”, when David’s men actually met Abiathar’s father, Ahimelech. This may seem like a curious mistake by Jesus, but if we continue reading both passages until we get to Abiathar, we can see that there is actually another category we can add to the chart.

4. Read 1 Samuel 22:6-23, then fill out the chart.

Decision of the Opposing Forces	Doeg the Edomite betrays what Ahimelech did for David, which results in Saul murdering Ahimelech and the priests at Nob. This decision by Saul ended the time of Ahimelech as high priest, and began Abiathar’s journey with David	(What do the Pharisees do in Mark 3:6?)
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Note what the Pharisees did on the Sabbath after Jesus healed the man with the withered hand. This is especially ironic considering the question Jesus placed before the Pharisees: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” The Pharisees initially responded in silence, but their actions were deafening.

The Pharisees were known for their outward examples of faith (such as possibly fasting twice a week!). Matthew records Jesus warning crowds about these outward expressions in Matthew

23:5-7. The Pharisees make their phylacteries broad, fringes long, and they love places of honor among other things. Think back to the story of the paralytic in Mark 2:3-5, which is another example of faith.

5. Read Matthew 23:5-7 and reread Mark 2:3-5. Compare and contrast the two examples of faith. Jesus warns against the outward expressions of faith by the Pharisees, yet sees the faith of the people with the paralytic. What do you notice? How should this affect us as followers of Jesus?

Lesson 6: Mark 3:7-35

At this point in Mark's Gospel account, Jesus's conquest of the promised land has included casting out unclean spirits, healing people miraculously, and teaching. In Mark 3:7-35 we see an effect from Jesus' ministry: people are sharing about Jesus, which is drawing increasingly large crowds to Him. No longer is the crowd around Him so large that just His doorway is blocked; now the crowd is so great that Jesus decides to get into a boat while He teaches "lest they crush Him".

1. Read Mark 3:7-35. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

As mentioned already, God genuinely desires to work with humans, and we see that in Mark 3:13-19 when Jesus appoints twelve Apostles. Since "apostle" literally means "sent ones", I will capitalize "Apostles" whenever referring to the original twelve sent out by Jesus. This also connects to the idea that Jesus is redoing the story of Israel, because Jesus is creating a new set of twelve, just like the twelve tribes of Israel. However, there may also be a very practical reason why Jesus appoints other people to do what He has been doing, and to help with "cleaning house" in Israel.

2. Reread Mark 3:7-12. What events here might trigger Jesus to appoint twelve people to send out and share in His mission? How can this connect to us being a part of God's mission?

The Twelve Apostles

Read the list of Apostles in Mark 3:17-19. Pay close attention to Simon the Zealot and Matthew, who was a tax collector. These two people came to Jesus from diametrically opposed philosophies. The Zealots were guerilla warriors (essentially terrorists), who wanted to overthrow Rome with violence. They tried this in the late 60s AD and occupied the temple in Jerusalem; this was the start of a rebellion that eventually led to the Romans surrounding and destroying the temple. Tax collectors, on the other hand, became rich while working alongside Rome, acquiring funds that *supported* the Roman legions occupying and oppressing Israel's promised land. Simon and Matthew should have been figuratively (or perhaps even literally) at each other's throats. Yet, under Jesus they were united together, despite their wildly different backgrounds.

3. What can we learn about from this list of Jesus' disciples that we can apply to our own lives?

Jesus Planting Seeds

Mark records that people are coming from seven different places to Jesus. Seven is a special number in Hebrew. Seven is often used to signify completeness (think about God creating the universe in seven days), since "seven" is spelled with the same Hebrew letters as another Hebrew word that means complete, full, or satisfied. However, there is also a practical reason why Mark records these places here in his Gospel account: many of the places will reappear later. We can safely infer that as Jesus healed people, they would go back to their homes, and tell stories about their healings. As Jesus healed people from around the region, He is essentially planting seeds that will provide fruit later. It is important to keep these places in mind as we continue to read.

4. What are the seven places?

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

As we have seen, Mark seems to be employing chiasms throughout his account so far. At this point we have actually finished a large chiasm that starts at Mark 1:1 and ends at Mark 3:35. (Mark will use a still larger chiasm in his Gospel account; we are actually at the beginning of a much larger one).

Examine the chart below.

A: 1:1-11 The Family of God	Jesus and the Father are connected with familial language. God arrives in the world as Jesus and the Father is well pleased with His Son
B: 1:12-2:22 Replaying of the Biblical Story	<p>Jesus passes temptations and liberates/ conquers the promised land from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unclean spirits -Illness -Demons -Paralysis -Greed <p>Jesus also explicitly refers to or implies about weddings, covenants, eating with God, and He also teaches</p>
C: 2:23-3:6 Questions and answers about the Sabbath	Going with Jesus is good, and will lead to rest, liberation, and being with our creator

<p>Here two paths diverge with how people relate to Jesus. We either go with Jesus, or we go against Him.</p>	<p>Going against Jesus is bad, and leads to harm and death</p>
<p>B: 3:7-30 Replaying of the Biblical Story</p>	<p>Jesus continues teaching, healing, gathering as the people desire liberation</p> <p>Jesus family thinks that He is “out of His mind”, similar to how the twelve spies in Numbers 13 thought that going to the Promised Land would result in their deaths</p> <p>Jesus responds to the scribes’ accusation with a parable about binding a strong man.</p>
<p>A: 3:31-35 The Family of God</p>	<p>Jesus asks rhetorically who His family is. He then responds with: “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, He is my brother and Sister and Brother.”</p>

The hinge section here presents us with a question. Jesus offers two paths: Which path are we going to choose? Will we join Jesus on a path that will lead to rest, liberation, and being with Him, or will we, like the Pharisees when they went to conspire with the Herodians, choose a path that leads to harm and death? By examining the chiasm, we see that if we join Jesus and do the will of God, we are members of His divine family.

5. What are your thoughts or questions regarding the chiasm/ thoughts presented above, and what Mark has presented about Jesus in chapter 1-3 so far?

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

It is important to discuss Jesus' warning about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. That verse can be terrifying, but if we read it in context, we see that Jesus is saying this in response to the scribes' accusations (Dan Kimball has a saying which is "Never read a Bible verse", meaning never read a Bible verse in isolation; always know the context around a Bible verse. Mark 3:29 is a good example of this).

*For more information about this, check out the *Food Trucks in Babylon* podcast episode "How (Not) to Read the Bible with Dan Kimball"

In context, the scribes are declaring that Jesus is doing all His good works (seen in section B of the chiasm above, "Replaying of the Biblical Story") through the power of Beelzebul/ the prince of demons/ Satan. Jesus replies with His first parable in Mark's Gospel account, Mark 3:23-27. He then follows that up with a warning, essentially saying: If you think all this good He is doing is from Satan and not the Holy Spirit, you are loyal to the wrong side. That is an intense warning.

Finally, pay attention to the parable about the strong man. It will play a critical role in Mark 5, and in the passages about Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection.

6. Reread Mark 3:27 and upload the ideas within it for later. What do you notice about this parable? What questions do you still have?

Lesson 7: Mark 4

In this section we plunge into some of Jesus' actual teaching, which Mark has alluded to in 1:21 and 2:13, but did not describe in detail. So far we have read one parable about a strong man, and in this chapter we will see four more parables, along with a critical God-moment on a boat in the middle of a storm.

1. Read Mark 4:1-41. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

As we read the chapter we saw Jesus share several parables about something starting small and then growing larger. We already witnessed this pattern when we read that Jesus' mission started with just himself, and then grew to include others, such as the twelve He appointed as Apostles. (It is important to note that He has not actually sent them out yet! Apparently they still need more training).

2. Study the chart below, and fill in any observations, thoughts or questions you have regarding these parables.

	Parable of the Sower	Parable of the Lamp under a basket	Parable of a seed growing	Parable of the Mustard Seed
Hidden	Seed, which is the word of God, into soil	Nothing is hidden except to be made manifest, to come to light	Seeds scattered, and then hidden in the ground	A mustard seed is sown within the earth.
Grows	If it is good soil, it bears fruit 30x, 60x, or 100x	Light from a lamp will fill up and illuminate a room, driving out darkness	Seed sprouts, and grows into grain, which can be harvested	The largest garden plant can grow from it, and it can provide for creation, such as the birds

Other thoughts/questions				
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Parables about Seeds

You'll notice the idea of a seed is present in three of the four parables, and the other parable contains information about light, which we know drives out darkness. The importance of a seed goes all the way back to Genesis 3:15, when God tells Eve that a seed (*zera* in Hebrew, often translated as offspring) will crush the head of the serpent (but will receive a fatal blow in return). This idea is expanded on in 2 Samuel 7:12-15. At this point in the book of Samuel Saul is long dead (having committed suicide after the disastrous Battle of Mount Gilboa) and David is the undisputed king of Israel. God promises David that one of his seeds (again, usually translated as "offspring"), an anointed one, will have an eternal kingdom, and God will be "to him a father, and he shall be to me a son."

This promise led to the anticipation that each king from the line of David might be the one to lead the eternal kingdom. This king never arrived in the Old Testament. Israel split into two kingdoms, and eventually was handed over into exile. However, the promise was never forgotten, and the prophets referred to this future King from the line of David as the Messianic (anointed) "branch" that was to come.

*For more information, read the chapter "The Kingdom of God" in *Multiply* by Francis Chan and Mark Beuving, which can be found at <http://multiplymovement.com/readmore/17>

3. Read 2 Samuel 7:12-15. What do you notice about this promise?

In addition, in each of the parables about seeds, the seed has to go into the ground before it can reach its potential. When connected with the promises in Genesis 3:15 (a promise given right as humanity began its rebellion) and 2 Samuel 7:12, it appears that the seed parables could be foreshadowing Jesus' death and resurrection.

In Mark 4:13 Jesus seems surprised that His disciples did not understand the Parable of the Sower. If we read that parable in isolation, it is easy to empathize with the disciples' confusion. However, they have been with Jesus for a while now, they have seen Him speak the word of God to different crowds, and they have witnessed the reactions of these crowds. In fact, we have seen people reacting in many of the ways that Jesus described.

4. Examine the chart below and fill it in. So far we have a variety of reactions from the Pharisees, several people receiving healings, Jesus' family, Jesus' disciples, and others. Some will fit in the chart below. Some may not. Some groups are large enough that they may fit in more than one soil. Discuss with your group how different people have responded to the word of Jesus, and what kind of soil that implies.

Seed location	Explanation	Connection to Previous reactions
Path	Taken by the Satan	
Rocky Ground	Received with Joy BUT fall away due to tribulation or persecution	
Among Thorns	Choked by the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and are unfruitful	

Good Soil	Produce a huge crop	

Right after the Parable of the Sower, Jesus shares a warning from Isaiah 6:9:

“They may indeed see, but not perceive,
And may indeed hear but not understand,
Lest they should turn and be forgiven*.”

**“forgiven” is the word “healed” in Isaiah 6:9

This is a critical idea to keep in mind as we continue to read Mark’s Gospel. Some people do see and are consequently healed, while others stubbornly refuse or are unable to see.

5. Consider what we have read so far in Mark’s Gospel account. Who has been able to perceive, understand, and be healed? Who has not been able to do that? How have the reactions of those that perceive what Jesus is doing differed from those who have not perceived what He is doing?

Jesus Calms the Storm

There is one final story in Mark 4, Jesus calming the storm. In this storm, Jesus again shows that He is God incarnate (which was previously revealed or implied in Mark 1:1, Mark 2:6-7, Mark 3:11) since He does something only God can do. In fact, Mark 4:35-41 bears some interesting connections to the creation story in Genesis 1:1-2. In both stories there are three similar problems, with three solutions all accomplished through God speaking.

Genesis 1		Mark 4:35-5:1	
Problems	Solutions	Problems	Solutions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Darkness 2. Chaos waters (also translated as abyss, or the deep) 3. There was no land 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lights 2. God separated the waters on day two into waters above and waters below 3. God brought land out of the waters 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Darkness (it was night) 2. Waters were collapsing (the storm above and the water below) 3. There was no land for the people in the boat 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus <i>speaks</i> and the wind and storm stop 2. In 5:1 they arrive at land. 3. We can assume that day soon followed this event

6. Reread Mark 4:35-5:1. What do you notice? The people on the boat end the story with a question: “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?”. How is Jesus revealing Himself to be God in this story?

Lesson 8: Mark 5

In Mark 5 we see Jesus traveling across the sea of Galilee towards a Gentile region, where He meets a demon-possessed man. Jesus drives out the demons, is asked to leave the region, and then performs two remarkable acts of healing.

1. Read Mark 5. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text?

Write them down here.

Jewish Messianic Expectations

The Jewish expectation for the Messiah was that of someone who would renew David's Kingdom while simultaneously casting out the legions of the Roman army. Jesus here shows that He is indeed casting out legions, just not the ones expected. We see this from the name of the demons, "Legion", in Mark 5:9. Here we see that Jesus is driving out *spiritual evil*, as opposed to the human army occupying the land of Israel during the first century. Paul is acutely aware of this aspect of the Messiah's mission (and consequently ours as well), and describes it to the early church vividly in Ephesians 6:10-12.

2. Read Ephesians 6:10-12. What is significant about Jesus driving out legions of spiritual evil instead of the Roman legions? How should this affect how we live our lives as Christ-followers?

Plundering from a Strong Man

Think back to earlier when Jesus was talking to the scribes who accused Him of using the power of the “prince of demons” to cast out demons. Jesus replied to them with “No one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.” Connect this to the story of the demon-possessed man. People *did* try to bind the demon-possessed man, but all their plans all failed. Someone stronger was required.

3. Reread Mark 3:27 with Mark 5:1-13 in mind, then fill out this chart connecting the symbols in Mark 3:27 with the events of Mark 5:1-13.

Mark 3:27	Mark 5:1-13
Strong Man	Legion, the demons
What is the house?	The person controlled by Legion
How have people previously tried to bind the Strong Man? How does Jesus bind the Strong Man?	
What goods are plundered?	The goods plundered from Legion is the man.
How does the plundered good (the man) respond to Jesus?	
What does Jesus tell the man to do? (This is important to note, since the effect of this will be seen later in chapter 7).	

As you read, you may have noticed that two of Jesus' miracles here, casting out Legion, and resurrecting Jairus' daughter, share some things in common. When we compare these two stories with one another, we can understand more about what Mark is trying to communicate. Several categories are presented in the chart below.

4. Study the chart and fill it in.

	Jesus liberates the man from Legion	Jesus resurrects Jairus' daughter
Jesus gets out of a boat, and someone rushes to meet Him	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A man with an unclean spirit comes out of the tomb -Fell down before Jesus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Jairus came out to meet Jesus -Fell down before Jesus
Desperate need/ Strong force that must be defeated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Legion of unclean spirits must be bound -The man had super-strength and could not be bound with shackles and chains 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -A daughter who is ill, who later dies -Death must be defeated
Connection to earlier event in Mark's Gospel account	<p>Mark 3:27</p> <p>The Legion is a "strong man" tormenting the man, causing him to bleed and be alone</p>	<p>Jesus likely taught in this synagogue during his teaching in Mark 1</p>
Incidences of begging/ What was begged for? (<i>parakaleo</i> in Greek)	<p>Legion: 1.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2.</p> <p>Townspeople:</p> <p>Freed man:</p>	<p>Jairus:</p>
Presence of blood		

<p>Unexpected reactions to Jesus</p>	<p>Townspeople:</p>	<p>Reaction in 5:40:</p>
<p>Task given to the healed person, or the witnesses of the healing</p>		

5. Study the chart. What thoughts or questions develop from it?

In the middle of the story of the healing of Jairus’ daughter, we get a bonus miracle: the healing of the bleeding woman. She believes that she only has to touch Jesus’ garment to be healed, and it turns out she is right. This process will again play a role in chapter 7. Jesus’ response to her is striking, and worth meditating on: “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” Jesus uses familial language with her (just like with the paralytic whom He calls “son!”), and praises her faith, just like the faith of the people helping the paralytic in Mark 2:5.

6. Reread Mark 2:1-5. Compare the faith there with the faith demonstrated by the bleeding woman. How do the stories help illuminate one another? What can we learn for our own faith from these stories? How might this connect to Mark 3:35?

Lesson 9: Mark 6:1-13

In Mark 6:1-13, we see the fourth of five Sabbaths mentioned. The Sabbath day has led to very mixed reactions for Jesus: sometimes He is honored and “His fame spread everywhere” (1:28), while other times people conspire with their enemies to figure out how to “destroy Him” (3:6).

Additionally, we finally see Jesus' Apostles sent out. Remember, they were appointed at Mark 3:14, but they were not sent out until Mark 6:7.

1. Read Mark 6:1-13. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

This is the fourth of five Sabbath stories, which should remind us of how important the Sabbath is. Keep in mind that Jesus said the Sabbath rest was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

We find two reasons why Israel was supposed to keep the Sabbath in the two lists of the Ten Commandments. Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. These are both about why Israel should maintain the Sabbath, yet the reasons are different. Finally, Ezekiel (another prophet at the time of the exile) shares more information about the Sabbath in Ezekiel 20:12: “I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which if a person does them, he shall live. Moreover, **I gave them my Sabbaths**, as a sign between me and them, **that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.**”

2. After reading Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15, and Ezekiel 20:12, what can we observe about the Sabbath, and why God wanted His people to keep it? Write down any observations or questions you have.

Now that we have seen two of the big reasons for the Sabbath are to know that God is the creator of the universe and that liberation from slavery is important to Him, let's examine the four Sabbath's we have studied already in the chart below.

3. Examine the chart, and finish filling it in.

	First Sabbath Story 1:21-31	Second Sabbath Story 2:23-28	Third Sabbath Story 3:1-6	Fourth Sabbath Story 6:1-6
Location	Capernaum	Grainfields	Synagogue in Capernaum	Jesus' hometown of Nazareth
People's responses/reactions to Jesus	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Astonished by Jesus' authority 2. Began sharing about Jesus to the region 	Pharisees call out Jesus' disciples working on the Sabbath	Pharisees ally with their enemies, the Herodians, just like Saul allied with Doeg the Edomite (a non-Israelite). They plan to destroy Jesus	
Problem	A man is possessed by an unclean spirit and recognizes who Jesus is	Pharisees are pointing out (accusing?) Jesus' disciples of harvesting and eating grain on the Sabbath	<p>A man is there with a withered hand.</p> <p>Pharisees are testing Jesus, not learning from Him</p>	
Jesus' reaction to the problem	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus rebukes the unclean spirit 2. Jesus commands it to be silent 3. Jesus casts it out 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus talks about David caring for people by having them eat the Bread of the Presence 2. Jesus explains that the Sabbath is for man & the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus asks: Is it lawful to save life or kill? 2. Jesus is grieved at the hardness of their hearts 3. Jesus heals the man 	

Other thoughts or questions				
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We also see that Jesus' Apostles are finally sent out. A question arises: Why are they sent out *now*? Jesus appointed His Apostles in Mark 3:14 when the crowds were so great they almost crushed Him and He had to go into a boat in order to teach. It took several more stories before the Apostles were finally sent out. We can therefore infer that events between the appointing of the Apostles and their sending out were critical for their development.

4. What has happened between Jesus appointing His Apostles in 3:14 and His sending them out in 6:7? What did Jesus want His Apostles to see and hear before He sent them out? These events and teachings were important for the Apostles, so how should these events and teachings affect our own lives?

Carry Nothing Except a Staff

When Jesus sends out His Apostles in groups of two, he instructs them to carry nothing except for a staff, which is *rhabdos* in Greek. By doing this, Jesus is telling His Apostles that they will be cared for on their missions (much like how Simon Peter's mother-in-law began caring for them in Mark 1:31). The staff the Apostles are carrying could be simply a walking stick, though it is important to note that a *rhabdos* is also a symbol of power and authority.

In fact, Jesus' disciples would have been aware of several stories from the Old Testament concerning a famous *rhabdos*: the stories about Moses' staff.

*In the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint, the Hebrew word for “staff” is translated into Greek as *rhados*.

We first see Moses’ staff in chapter 4 of Exodus when God tells Moses to “[t]hrow it on the ground”, after which the staff immediately becomes a serpent. The word for serpent is *nachash*, which is the same word used in Genesis 3 when Adam and Eve fail to rule over the serpent, and humanities’ rebellion begins. The similarities between these two stories should cause us to compare and contrast them.

	Genesis 3	Exodus 4
A story involving people and a serpent	<p>Adam and Eve were supposed to rule over creation (Genesis 1:26-28) as God’s image. However, instead of ruling over the serpent, Adam and Eve allow the serpent to deceive them into choosing rebellion against God.</p> <p>God says that a descendant of Eve will crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15).</p>	<p>Moses runs away from the serpent that his staff became. However, God tells Moses to catch the serpent by the tail.</p> <p>Moses does this, and immediately the reader may wonder: <i>Is Moses the promised descendant of Eve?</i></p> <p>However, remember the descendant of Eve is supposed to crush the “<i>head</i> of the serpent” while simultaneously being struck by the serpent. Moses is only catching the serpent by the tail (Exodus 4:2-4).</p> <p>This points to someone in the future who will finally crush the serpent (and what the serpent represents), not simply hold onto it as it turns back into a staff.</p>

Furthermore, the staff Moses is carrying represents the power of God, and is even referred to as “the staff of God” in Exodus 4:20.

Later, when Moses and Aaron confront Pharaoh (Exodus 7), the power which the staff points to becomes more evident. During this story, Aaron casts down the staff, and it again becomes a serpent. However, Pharaoh’s magicians are, oddly, able to replicate this, and turn their staffs into serpents as well. This probably caused some fear within Moses and Aaron, until the staff of God “swallow[s] up [the magician’s] staffs”, which is symbolically contrasting God’s power with the power of Pharaoh; Pharaoh’s power is being swallowed up by God.

Moses' staff continues to reveal God's power as it is present during several of the subsequent plagues. It even plays a key role in the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus 14:16! After the miraculous liberation of the Israelites through the Red Sea, Moses and Israel commemorate this with a spontaneous song in Exodus 15, and declare that God "stretched out [His] right hand, [and] the earth **swallowed** them" (Exodus 15:12). By using the same language from Exodus 7, the author is drawing our attention back to the original confrontation when the "staff of God" **swallowed** up the staffs of the magicians.

Jesus' Apostles would have known these stories, and probably had them in mind as they were sent out two by two, just like Moses and Aaron.

5. Consider the details here as Jesus sends out the twelve Apostles. He does not send them alone (He knows they will be provided for on their journeys), and they have a *rhabdos*, which can be a symbol of power and authority. What is significant about this? What other thoughts or questions do you have?

Lesson 10: Mark 6:14-44

Mark 6:14 is the beginning of a very unusual scene in this Gospel account. The focus suddenly diverts from Jesus to a bizarre story about King Herod Antipas*. In it we see that news of Jesus has reached Herod Antipas, who had married his brother's wife, Herodias. John the Baptist had confronted Herod about this, which led to John's arrest, mentioned back in 1:14. In this passage Mark describes a birthday dinner that King Herod is throwing for himself. His daughter-in-law does something, presumably scandalous, that causes Herod to offer her a gift of considerable magnitude.

*King Herod Antipas is the son of Herod the Great, the one who ordered the murder of the infants described in Matthew 2.

1. Read Mark 6:14-29. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

A Tale of Two Feasts

Herod's banquet is immediately followed by another story about a feast. Matthew 14:13 tells us that when Jesus heard about his cousin's death, He wanted to retreat to a desolate place with His disciples, likely to grieve. However, Jesus is followed by thousands of people, and despite His sorrow regarding the death of John the Baptist, Jesus is still filled with compassion and provides food for all the people who followed Him. It seems Mark has juxtaposed these two stories about two kings presenting two feasts— one a feast of death, the other a feast of life— for us to study.

2. Complete the chart.

	Herod's Banquet	Jesus feeding the 5,000
King		
Motivation of the	To honor himself	Compassion

King	(after his daughter in law dances for Herod and he makes a promise). To save face after making an oath to Herodias' daughter in front of his officers	
Guests	Officers and nobles	
Activities	Herod's daughter-in-law danced, pleasing him and his officials	Jesus taught the people many things
Food Served	John the Baptist's head on a platter	
Location	Presumably Herod's palace	A desolate place (food being provided for people in a desolate place is a strong echo to the Israelites' wandering in the wilderness)
King's Command to receive the food	Mark 6:27 reads: "And immediately the king sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head." The words "with orders" is <i>epitasso</i> in Greek, which means to command.	Mark 6:39 also has a king giving a command: "He commanded them all to sit down in groups on the green grass." The word "commanded" here is again <i>epitasso</i> in Greek.

3. Study the chart. What observations or questions do you have?

Another Chiasm!

Mark 6:29-32 appears to be the hinge of a large chiasm consisting of patterned events starting from Mark 1:1 and concluding in Mark 9:13. From Mark 1:1 to 6:28, we have seen events that can be divided up into several categories. The categories then reverse themselves until Jesus is transfigured in chapter 9.

A: 1:1-20 Jesus' identity, John the Baptist, & His disciples
B: 1:21-2:14 Jesus' conquest through casting out unclean spirits and healing
C: Mark 2:15-28 Meals with Challenges
D: Mark 3:1-35 Jesus' conquest through casting out unclean spirits and healing
E: Mark 3:31-4:34 Teachings with connections to previous stories
F: Mark 4:35-6:13 Divine moment on a boat, leading to diverse responses
G: Mark 6:14-29 A feasts served by a king
H: Mark 6:30-32 Rest from your labor with Jesus
G: Mark 6:33-44 A feasts served by a king
F: Mark 6:45-56, 7:1-5 Divine moment on boat, leading to diverse responses
E: Mark 6:53-7:23 Teachings with connections to previous stories
D: Mark 7:24-37 Jesus' conquest through casting out unclean spirits and healing
C: Mark 8:1-21 Meals with Challenges
B: Mark 8:22-26 Jesus' conquest through casting out unclean spirits and healing
A: Mark 8:27-9:13 Jesus' identity, John the Baptist, & His disciples

4. Reread the hinge, Mark 6:29-32. What observations or questions do you have from these verses?

Eating with God

There is an interesting poem in Isaiah 25:6-9 about people eating with God. In this poem we can observe some parallels with Jesus feeding the 5,000, while noting other aspects that remain unique to Isaiah's poem. Some things to note from Isaiah's poem are that all peoples will eat a magnificent feast, and God will be joining to eat as well:

“And He will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples
the veil that is spread over all nations.
He will swallow up death forever.”

(Did you notice the chiasm there?)

In this meal God is eating death, which is figuratively called a covering and a veil.

Finally, it is interesting to note the end of Isaiah 25:9: “Let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” The word salvation here is *yeshua*. *Yeshua* is Jesus' name in Hebrew.

5. Read Isaiah 25:6-9. What connections do you see with this feast and Jesus' feeding of the 5,000? What differences do you notice? Write down any observations or questions you have.

Lesson 11: Mark 6:45-7:5

In Mark 6:45-7:5 we see the second of Jesus' divine encounters on a boat, followed by more divine healings and rejections. This passage has parallels with Mark 4:35-6:13. Often by reading the two parallel sections of a chiasm together, details may be illuminated that contribute to our understanding of what the author is trying to communicate. For example, the first boat encounter ends with the people on the boat asking: "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?" The first dialogue in the second boat encounter is Jesus saying, almost as if in response to that previous question: "Take heart; it is I. Do not be afraid." The words translated "It is I" in Greek are *ego eimi*, which mean "I am"-- the Greek translation of the divine name of God revealed in Exodus 3:14. In this story Jesus seems to be saying *ego eimi* to simply identify Himself, but the juxtaposition with the previous boat encounter is provocative.

1. Read Mark 6:45-7:5 and Mark 4:35-6:13 together. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Just Passing By

In addition, Jesus wants to "pass by" His disciples. This can seem like an odd detail, but each detail in the Bible is important, and we should ask: Why did Jesus want to "pass by" His disciples? When we look at the Old Testament, we can see this is exactly what God did with Moses in Exodus 33:18-34:7, and with Elijah in 1 Kings 19:10-12, two people that will appear later in Mark's Gospel account.

2. Read Exodus 33:18-34:7, 1 Kings 19:10-12, and Mark 6:48. What additional insights into this brief detail are developed by comparing these three passages?

Bread in the Wilderness

Mark includes another interesting detail in 6:52: the disciples “did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.” The clues to who Jesus is are all there, and the disciples knew that a miraculous supply of food had just been provided in a desolate place, much like God providing manna in the wilderness in Exodus 16:1-6. However, their hearts were hardened, much like Pharaoh’s was in the book of Exodus, and like how the Israelites were in spite of the miracles from God they had witnessed throughout the Exodus and wilderness journey.

3. Read Exodus 16:1-6 about bread from heaven and reread Mark 6:38-44. What connections do you see between these passages? What differences do you notice?

Another element of this chiasm is healings, which take place at Gennesaret on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Think back to Jesus healing people from around the Sea of Galilee in Mark 3:7. We can infer that people in attendance at that series of healings are the ones who immediately recognize Him, and then “ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard He was”. Mark then includes two interesting details:

1. Simply touching the fringe of Jesus’ garment was enough to heal them. Compare this to the bleeding woman from 5:28 who desired to touch Jesus’ garments, and those touching Jesus for healing in 3:10
2. The healings occurred in the *marketplace*.

4. Reread Mark 3:7, 3:10, 5:38, and 6:56 together. What new observations do you have? What new questions arise?

Strange Reactions

Finally, Jesus again faces rejection from people. Here the Pharisees accuse Jesus' disciples of eating "with defiled hands", which is a direct challenge to Jesus' authority as a teacher. Mark tells his readers that the Pharisees would not eat unless they washed their hands. This does not mean they would wash their hands with soap and water, but they would actually ritually submerge their hands into a basin of water. We can tell this because Mark uses the word *baptizo* in 4:2, which is from where we get the word "baptize". This washing of hands was not a Biblical command.

Notice also that Mark uses the word "marketplace" (*agora*) again in 7:4. He only uses this word three times in his Gospel account (the third time will come in chapter 12 when Jesus warns about the scribes), and we can infer he is using it for a reason: the Pharisees had been in the marketplace, where they had witnessed the miraculous healings of Jesus. Instead of praising Him or following Him, they challenge Him by noting that His disciples do not "baptize" their hands before eating. Echoes of the Pharisees standing idly by the man with a withered hand in Mark 3:1-6 resume a deafening roar as they again challenge Jesus regarding this, despite the obvious miracles and healings He is doing that point to His divinity.

5. Reread Mark 3:1-6 and Mark 7:1-5. What additional observations can be made about the Pharisees from comparing these two passages?

Not everyone missed who Jesus was and tried to challenge His authority. We will see in Mark 12:28-34 a scribe seems to be genuinely asking Jesus what the greatest commandment is. Jesus replies it is "to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" and He continues with "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these." These commandments were clearly important to Jesus, so they should be important to us as well.

6. Take some time to reflect on your own heart. Are you loving God more and your neighbor more? Take some time to pray for God's blessing to love Him more and to love your neighbor more.

Lesson 12: Mark 7:1-23

In this passage we will be revisiting some verses we read last week because they are critical for understanding Jesus' argument when He is confronted by the Pharisees regarding the washing of hands before meal time. Jesus is going to respond with a quote from Isaiah, which says:

“This people honors me with their lips,
But their heart is far from me;
In vain do they worship me,
Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.”

When Jesus quotes this passage to the Pharisees, He is referring to the *Halakhah*, which is a collection of rules and teachings that the Pharisees and other rabbis found sacred. These groups took the 613 laws of the Torah (or 611 laws— there is disagreement since some laws repeat or appear to repeat), and added rules so they could be followed by everyone in everyday life. Theologians N. T. Wright and Michael Bird write this is because the Pharisees believed “...all life had to be lived as if one were in the Temple, in the very presence of God.” These rules rose to have the same authority as the Torah, and this is what Jesus is confronting when he points out that the teachings of the *Halakhah* actually contradict passages in the Torah. The example Jesus uses is about the relationship children should have with their parents. Children were expected to help care for their parents as they became older, but, according to the Pharisees' teachings, people could give themselves to God, and abandon their obligation to care for their parents.

1. Read Mark 7:1-23. Remember this is after the Pharisees (most likely) saw Jesus healing people in the marketplace. What thoughts, observations, or questions do you have?

This passage can be linked with Mark 3:31-4:34. Look back over that section. In Mark 3:31-4:34 and 7:1-23, Jesus is confronted by religious leaders, and this results in critical teachings from Jesus. The Parable of the Sower also resonates with increased intensity when connected to events described in Mark 6:53-7:5. In Mark 6:53-56 we see a group of people running around bringing others to Jesus to be healed, while a different group of people confront Jesus regarding additional rules created by man. The differences between the types of soils represented by these people are now in even greater contrast.

2. Reread at 3:31-4:34. What connections do you see with 7:1-23? What observations or questions do you have?

Notice that Jesus quotes Isaiah in both 7:6-7 and 4:12. One passage is about being blind to what is happening (which plants seeds that should make us wonder: how can one help a blind man see?). The other quote from Isaiah is about the dangers of equating the teachings of man with Scripture.

3. Read Mark 7:6-7 and 4:12. Reflect on these passages. How have we seen the truth of these passages played out through Mark's Gospel account so far?

In both passages there is a preceding story that led to a confrontation with the religious leaders. This confrontation then leads directly to teachings of Jesus.

4. Study the chart below and complete it.

	Mark 3:31-34	Mark 7:1-23
Healing that Precedes the Passage	Man with a withered hand	Several people in several marketplaces
Concern of the Religious Leaders	Jesus is healing on the Sabbath (Bonus concern: Jesus' family think he is out of His mind)	Jesus' disciples are not washing their hands after being in the marketplace. The Pharisees think the disciples have defiled hands.
Teachings of Jesus	Jesus' family is those who do God's will The Kingdom of God starts small, almost hidden, but then grows.	

Advocating for Others

There are other patterns in all of these stories of which we should be aware. Jesus is always working with people who are advocating for others and bringing others to Him. Conversely, He critiques those who are trying to pridefully isolate and uplift themselves through strict observance of rules and laws.

That does not mean we can do whatever we want as long as we advocate for others; we *can* still be defiled by what is in our hearts. Jesus provides several examples of what defiles us from within our own hearts. Notice that each sin He mentions not only hurts the sinner, but also someone else.

5. Study the chart below. Fill out how each thing that defiles people also negatively affects others. You may need to look up the meaning of some of these words. I did.

Defilement from the heart	How it affects other people
Evil thoughts	
Sexual immorality	
Theft	
Murder	
Adultery	
Coveting	
Wickedness	
Deceit	
Sensuality	

Envy	
Slander	
Pride	
Foolishness	

We can see the Pharisees were guilty of some of these, particularly pride. In fact, if we compare this list to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, we see Him expand on what it means to murder and commit adultery. As we read Jesus' teachings, we will realize that we are in just as much need for Jesus' love and forgiveness as the Pharisees, along with all the people that met Him during His ministry 2,000 years ago.

6. Read Matthew 5:21-30 while considering Jesus' teachings we studied in this lesson. What connections, observations, or questions do you have? How should the teachings of Jesus here affect our lives?

Lesson 13: Mark 7:24-37

Mark continues his Gospel account by describing Jesus' trip to Tyre and Sidon. This may seem like an odd detour for Jesus to take during His ministry, especially if the Gentiles who lived in the region, such as the Syrophenician woman, were not to have "the children's bread" yet, since Jesus' ministry was initially for the family of Israel. However, there is a deep reason why Jesus retreats to Tyre and Sidon. In fact, He is not retreating at all! Rather it appears He is continuing the process of re-playing the story of Israel, as it should have gone. Tyre and Sidon were originally considered part of the promised land. We see this in Joshua 13:6. However, Judges 1:31 records that Israel never acquired this land before they started to forsake God. In 2 Kings 14 they came close to it as they expanded their borders in the direction of Tyre and Sidon but ultimately the kingdom of Israel never reached its fullness. Jesus, by going to Tyre and Sidon, is again faithfully doing what Israel was called to do.

In addition, here we see Jesus' ministry expand from a focus on His Jewish family, to several stories where He is working with Gentiles.

1. Read Mark 7:24-27. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

This part of Mark seems to be linked through chiasm to Mark 3:1-35. Both parts include healings, and a wide range of reactions connected to those healings.

2. Reread Mark 3:1-35. In this passage Jesus is most likely healing Jewish people. Compare and contrast that with what He is doing in these passages, where He is healing Gentiles. What observations or questions do you have?

Seeds Producing Fruit

Jesus tries to “be hidden” at the beginning of this passage, but is soon discovered. This is probably because of the seeds planted in fertile soil back in Mark 3:7-8, where Mark specifically includes Tyre and Sidon in the list of places people came from. This can explain how in Mark 7:25, after Jesus entered the region of Tyre and Sidon, He was immediately approached by a Gentile: a Syrophenician woman who is advocating for her daughter. She has an interesting interaction with Jesus, in which He shares an analogy that needs to be read closely in order to understand it.

First, in Jesus’ analogy the children are the house of Israel, and they are to eat *first* (7:27). The word “first” is important to notice, because it implies that there will be other feeding opportunities later. Second, in the analogy the Gentiles (and therefore the Syrophenician woman) are dogs (*kynarion* in Greek, which means a pet dog that would be inside at mealtimes). They are to be fed later.

Jesus is using this analogy to explain the order of His ministry: He is going first to the Jews, then to the rest of the nations.

The Syrophenician woman’s response shows she understands this, but she points out an implication within Jesus’ statement: “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” By showing her faith in Jesus’ abilities, the demon oppressing the Syrophenician woman’s daughter is cast out.

The Syrophenician woman’s actions as she sought care for her daughter mirror the actions of the people who knew the deaf man in Mark 7:31-37. Both stories are about people showing their love for someone in need by advocating for that person in front of Jesus. This is in stark contrast to how the Pharisees acted around the man with the withered hand. (True, there is not much the Pharisees could have done for the man, but seeking the destruction of Jesus is definitely the wrong choice.)

3. Study and complete the chart. In these three stories we see a person suffering. The person suffering is surrounded by others who are not suffering in the same way.

	Mark 3:1-6	Mark 7:24-30	Mark 7:31-37
People suffering	The man with a withered hand	The Syrophoenician woman's daughter	The deaf man
People not suffering	The Pharisees	The Syrophoenician woman (though she is undoubtedly suffering at the distress her daughter is facing)	The companions of the deaf man
Actions of the people not suffering	Trying to accuse Jesus of something, to see if He would heal on the Sabbath. They subsequently join the Herodians to come up with a plan to "destroy Him"	Syrophoenician woman...	The companions of the deaf man...
Goal of the people not suffering	To maintain cleanliness through strict observance of the Torah and the <i>Halakhah</i>		

This is a pattern in the Mark's Gospel account. The Pharisees are incredibly focused on their own understanding of the way of the world, and remain pridefully ignorant of Jesus' mission. In contrast the Syrophoenician woman and the deaf man's companions advocated for others they cared for. The Syrophoenician woman was even willing to let herself be lowered in status and referred to as a dog as she advocated for her daughter.

4. What can you observe from the actions of the Pharisees when contrasted with the actions of the people in Mark 7:24-31?

“And in Your Seed Shall All the Nations of the Earth Be Blessed”

The deaf person in the Decapolis is another example of at least three things:

1. People advocating for others
2. Jesus taking His ministry to the Gentiles
3. Growth of a seed planted earlier in Mark’s Gospel account

It may seem sudden that Jesus is with Gentiles, conquering spiritual evil and healing them. However, this was always God’s plan: first bless the family of Abraham, and through them bless the nations of the world. This is stated in Genesis 12:1-3 (and then repeated in Genesis 18:18, 22:18, 26:4, 28:14– this repetition reveals how central this is to God’s plan). Jeremiah even shares it poetically in Jeremiah 4:1-2 as Judah is about to lose the promised land and go into exile due to their sin.

Throughout the Old Testament, the family of Abraham struggled with this part of God’s promise. Jesus is the one to finally fulfill this blessing of the nations through His ministry, death, and resurrection.

5. Read Genesis 12:1-3, and Jeremiah 4:1-2. How do you see Jesus faithfully fulfilling the blessings and promises given to Abraham in His interactions with the Gentiles?

It is odd that Jesus is recognized in the Decapolis, since the Decapolis is not mentioned in the list of areas in Mark 3:7-8. However, there was a seed planted in Mark 5:19-20 that is now bearing fruit. Back in Mark 5, the man who was freed from the Legion of demons begged to join Jesus. Jesus, surprisingly, denied his request, and said: “Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how He has had mercy on you.” The man then goes home *to the Decapolis*, where he proclaims what Jesus had done for Him.

6. Think back to the Parable of the Sower. We have seen several examples of good soil that produced fruit that appeared several chapters later. How is fruit being produced here? How should this affect our own lives?

Lesson 14: Mark 8:1-21 and Mark 8:22-26

Mark 8:1-21 describes a miraculous meal for around 4,000 people, a challenge from the Pharisees, and more teachings. First of all, this is the second miraculous feast that Jesus has been a part of, and it very closely resembles the first. However, there appears to be one key difference. Due to the location of the first miraculous feast, it most likely was for Jewish people. In contrast, the second miraculous feast appears to be for Gentiles. There is debate about this, but some evidence supporting that the feast is for Gentiles is:

1. This is the third story after two specifically about Gentiles
2. The beginning of this story (8:1) starts with “In those days”, indicating that it happened when Jesus was around the Gentile Decapolis
3. Matthew writes in his parallel passage, Matthew 15:31, that while Jesus was healing people directly before the feast of the 4,000 they “glorified the God of Israel.” This would be an odd detail to write if the people were Jewish, since they would have simply glorified “the Lord”. It seems likely that this detail is included because these people were not Jewish, but were worshipping the God of Israel, and therefore glorifying Him
4. In Mark 8:4, Jesus’ disciples ask how they will feed this crowd. They have already seen Jesus miraculously feed even more people. Why are they suddenly doubting? It makes sense if this crowd is made up of Gentiles rather than Jews. The disciples understood that Jesus could provide for Jews, but providing for Gentiles came as a surprise to them

1. Read Mark 8:1-21. What thoughts, observations, or questions do you have?

This section appears to be linked to another meal that occurred in Mark 2:15-28. In Mark 2:15-28 we see Jesus having a meal with tax collectors and sinners. The scribes of the Pharisees question Jesus about this meal, and John the Baptist’s disciples and the Pharisees question why Jesus is not fasting. Jesus’ reply to them is profound, especially when connected to the meal He shared with (what appears to be) Gentiles in the wilderness. Jesus’ claims that He is the bridegroom, and the wedding feast between Him and His people is still ongoing.

Because the wedding feast is still happening, Jesus is revealing that Gentiles are His people, too.

2. Read Mark 2:15-28. Think about the impact here, that the wedding is still going on (Jesus, the bridegroom, is still on earth) and that Gentiles are now a part of it. What observations, questions, or additional connections do you have?

Resolving Old Testament Plot Tensions

Think back to the two big problems at the end of the Old Testament:

1. How will God reconcile with His people?
2. How will God reconcile with His the rest of humanity?

The Messiah was expected to redeem His people, but there was surprise that Gentiles were part of God's family as well (even though the prophets hint about it, for example in Isaiah 49:6 and Isaiah 66:18-21. That is why the fledgling church, which was predominantly Jewish at the time, had to meet in Jerusalem in Acts 15 to discuss how Gentiles should be incorporated into the church).

Jesus, by having a feast with Gentiles, is showing that He has come to solve both of those problems.

We can even see symbolic hints at this with the number of baskets of broken bread left over after each meal. Twelve baskets is important, since the number twelve can represent the entirety of Israel because of the twelve tribes. Seven is also an important number, since it can symbolize completeness. It is possible that Jesus, by having twelve baskets and seven baskets of broken bread after each feast, is signaling the extent of His mission: to reach the broken people of Israel and the broken people of the rest of the earth.

After this we see the Pharisees come and challenge Jesus to show a sign from heaven. Jesus refuses to show a sign from heaven, and one reason is He has already shown many signs pointing to who He is. Think back to Isaiah 61:1-2. Again, this is the passage from Isaiah that Jesus cites at the beginning of His ministry in Luke 4. It is important to note that Jesus also cites Isaiah 42:7 in that announcement as well.

3. Reread Isaiah 61:1-2, and Isaiah 42:7. Think about all the miracles that Jesus has accomplished throughout Mark's Gospel account. Write down some of those miracles here. What are the Pharisees blind to?

“They May Indeed See, but not Perceive”

Before we are too harsh on the Pharisees, it is helpful to remember the passage from Isaiah that Jesus quoted in His teaching in Mark 4:

“They may indeed see, but not perceive,
And may indeed hear but not understand,
Lest they should turn and be forgiven [forgiveness is healed in Isaiah 6:9].”

With this in mind, reread Mark 8:14-21. The same warning Jesus gave in Mark 4 is being referenced throughout those verses. Jesus' disciples *also* do not yet fully perceive. They do not yet fully understand. Despite seeing everything, they too are spiritually blind and deaf. They have witnessed the sudden expansion of the Kingdom of God that Jesus described in His parables in Mark 4, yet are still blind to the fullness of Jesus' mission. Jesus' warning to His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod is critical here: the Kingdom of God is expanding but it can be hard to notice *and* there will be opposition. Be wary of the opposition, because, like leaven, it starts internally and spreads.

It is precisely at this point that Jesus heals a blind man in Mark 8:22-26. The theological significance of this is explosive after the challenge of the Pharisees and the spiritual blindness

of His disciples. This lone healing is connected via chiasm with several healings in Mark 1:12-2:14.

4. Reread Mark 1:12-2:14 and Mark 8:22-26. What questions, thoughts or observations do you have?

Why Two Attempts?

One fascinating thing to note is that it took Jesus *two* attempts to heal the blind man at Bethsaida. This is really odd, because undoubtedly Jesus could have healed the man in a single attempt— in fact, Jesus does just that later in Mark 10. However, the multiple attempts to heal the man of physical blindness parallels the multiple miracles and signs the disciples have seen that should heal them from spiritual blindness. Many of these miracles and signs are described in Mark 1:12-2:14. Rather than judge the disciples for their apparent ineptitude, we should take this as a powerful warning: are we just half-seeing like the blind man at Bethsaida? Are we witnessing God's signs and love, but not understanding it and therefore not being transformed by who He truly is?

5. What are you aware of that points to God? How would you know if you are fully aware of those signs, and who God truly is? What can you do to be healed of spiritual blindness if that is happening to you?

Lesson 15: Mark 8:27-9:13

Here we reach the end of the large chiasm which started at the beginning of Mark's Gospel account. Remember what the hinge of the chiasm is (emphasis added):

“The Apostles returned to Jesus and told Him all they had done and taught. And He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a desolate place **and rest** a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure, even to eat.”

Mark 8:27-9:13 includes confusion about who Jesus is, what He is going to do, and an event referred to as the Transfiguration. We see Peter recognize that Jesus is the Christ, the promised anointed one. However, it is probable that Peter is expecting Jesus to be a military leader who will overthrow Roman oppression. When Jesus says He is going to die, Peter has the audacity, possibly motivated by surprise, to rebuke Jesus. Peter's thinking is: How can the Messiah liberate the nation of Israel if He dies? This produces a strong rebuke from Jesus, in which He refers to Peter (and Peter's way of thinking) as Satan. Mark even emphasizes that Jesus knew He was looking at His disciples when He says this! This all points to what Jesus' actual mission is: to confront and defeat the legions of spiritual evil, not the Roman legions.

There is also teaching about what it means to be Jesus' follower, and a prophecy about the Kingdom of God coming with power.

1. Read Mark 8:27-9:13. What thoughts, observations, or questions do you have?

Planting the Flag of the Kingdom of God at the Heart of Spiritual Darkness

The transfiguration is one of the most confusing stories within the Gospel accounts. Why is it so important for Jesus to hike to a mountaintop and then glow? There are several explanations for this, but one compelling one relates to the understanding that the transfiguration occurred on either Mount Tabor (as many early Christians believed), or Mount Hermon (which is believed by many modern scholars due to its proximity to Caesarea Philippi). Both places were pagan

centers, where false gods such as Baal had been worshiped. Remember who Jesus has been conquering throughout His entire ministry: unclean spirits and demons. The transfiguration, which reveals Jesus' divinity, occurs directly in the heartland of spiritual evil. It is like Jesus is claiming this land for the Kingdom of God, and thus liberating it from false gods.

Another critical detail is mentioned before Jesus even begins his walk up the mountain: this all occurred "after six days". That is an odd thing to write, until we realize Mark is saying this all happened *on the seventh day*. Echoes of the Old Testament should be resounding in our heads: What did God do on the seventh day in Genesis 2:2? *He rested*. What was Israel supposed to do every seven days? *Rest*. The only way people can truly have rest is for spiritual evil and sin to be defeated at its source.

2. The transfiguration could be viewed as Jesus planting the flag of the Kingdom of God into the heartland of spiritual evil. There is a lot to unpack here. What thoughts, questions, or observations do you have? Share with your group and unpack your thoughts, questions, and observations together.

Mark 8:27-9:13 seems to be linked through chiasm with Mark 1:1-20.

3. Reread Mark 1:1-20 and then complete the chart noting the connections between Mark 8:27-9:13 and Mark 1:1-20.

Connection	Mark 1:1-20 Mark 8:27-9:13	Mark 8:27-9:13
Revealing of who Jesus is	Mark 1:1, Mark 1:11	Mark 8:30, 9:2-3

John the Baptist	Mark 1:2-1:8	Mark 9:11-13 (remember who John the Baptist was dressed like in Mark 1:6)
Named Disciples present	Mark 1:16-20	Mark 9:2
Jesus suffering	Mark 1:13	Mark 8:31
The presence of Satan	Mark 1:13	Mark 8:33
“Follow Me”	Mark 1:17	Mark 8:34
The Father	Mark 1:11	Mark 9:7

speaking from heaven		
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4. Study the chart you have made. By juxtaposing these two passages, many similarities and differences become apparent. What observations or questions do you have based on this chart?

“The Kingdom of God... with Power”

There is debate about what Jesus meant when He said: “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.” Jesus is most likely pointing to His resurrection, the point at which Jesus defeated the ultimate weapon of evil: death. The kingdom of God was inaugurated then with power: power over death itself, and eleven of His twelve disciples witnessed it.

Additionally, it can seem odd that Jesus knows He is going to die. To understand this more, it’s helpful to note two things. The first is that Jesus had just provoked spiritual darkness with His transfiguration, which revealed His divinity. The second is examining the fate of John the Baptist. Both John the Baptist and Jesus preached the same message. Jesus knew what happened to John the Baptist, and could see the likelihood of that fate awaiting Him as well.

However, this fate was always God’s plan. This is first mentioned in Genesis 3:15, when God tells Eve that a seed from her will one day crush evil at its source, but not before that evil delivers a killing blow. In addition, not only was Jesus the Messiah, He was also the Suffering Servant, famously described in Isaiah 52:13-53:6.

5. Read Isaiah 52:13-52:6. Pay particular attention to 53:5. Jesus knew the Scriptures. He knew His message would get Him killed, just like John the Baptist. He also knew He was provoking spiritual evil to act against Him. Yet, He willingly continued with His ministry for us so that “with His wounds we are healed”. Meditate on this, and write down any observations, discoveries, or questions here.

Lesson 16: Mark 9:14-35

At this point in Mark's Gospel account Jesus' teachings intensify because He knows He is heading to a final confrontation in Jerusalem. Now is His time to teach His disciples more of what they need to know in order to start the church after Jesus' resurrection.

As Jesus leaves the mountain following His transfiguration, He heads to another mountain: Jerusalem. The passages from Jesus' transfiguration to His arrival at Jerusalem (Mark 9:2-11:11) appear to form yet another chiasm. Remember, chiasms are a communication device, and can be used as a learning aid since they force us to reread Scripture. Chiasms help us meditate on Scripture by presenting parallel passages to compare while simultaneously considering the impact of the central hinge.

This new chiasm can be arranged like this:

A: Mark 9:2-13 Jesus on a mountain with His disciples
B: Mark 9:14-35 Jesus healing, talking about His death & resurrection, & the church
C: Mark 9:36-49 Jesus' plan for the church, with children as an instructional aide
D: Mark 9:50 Live at peace with one another
C: Mark 10:1-22 Jesus' plan for the church, with children as an instructional aide
B: Mark 10:23-52 Jesus healing, talking about His death & resurrection, & the church
A: Mark 11:1-11 Jesus on a mountain with His disciples

Reading Scripture is important, and Psalm 1 declares that meditating on Scripture (the law) is a blessing. The word translated "law" is *torah*, which means more than just the rules in the Bible. It can refer to the entire Old Testament, and consequently the entire New Testament as well, since the Old Testament points to the Messiah, who is described in the New Testament.

1. Read Psalm 1. How does the psalmist contrast the wicked with the righteous? What does the righteous person do? What does the wicked person do?

In Mark 9:14-32 we see another healing, and this one contains a distinctive twist. Jesus' disciples are arguing with a crowd, and a man is seeking help for his son because an unclean spirit has been tormenting him. We have seen Jesus heal and cast out unclean spirits before, but something unexpected happens during the events leading to this particular healing. Jesus then goes through Galilee, and again explains He is going to die. In addition, Jesus does not want anyone to know that He is passing through Galilee, probably because He needs to make it to Jerusalem for the upcoming Passover. Finally, this section ends with Jesus sharing some critical wisdom about how to live as the church following His resurrection.

2. Read Mark 9:14-35. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

The Advocates

This section contains yet another person advocating for the needs of someone else. We have looked at this concept before, and this is clearly a category that Mark wants us to understand. We have even seen Jesus Himself advocating for other people in His feeding of the 5,000 and His feeding of the 4,000. Study the charts below, compare and contrast the stories of the different people advocating for others.

3. Study this chart of the advocates we have seen so far. Complete the charts by filling in any observations you have about each of these examples, and fill in the last column about the man asking for healing for his son.

	The companions of the paralytic	Jairus and his daughter	People at Gerrassanet	Syrophonecian Woman and her daughter
Passage	Mark 2:1-12	Mark 5:21-24, 35-43	Mark 7:53-56	Mark 7:24-30
Before the healing	Jesus was teaching people at his home in Capernaum	Jesus was healing a man possessed by a legion of demons	Jesus walks across the water in His second divine boat	Jesus teaches that what defiles a person comes out of

			<p>encounter.</p> <p>People have already seen Jesus' healing powers in Mark 3:7-10</p>	<p>their heart, not in through their stomachs</p>
Surprising details	<p>People come and send a man through Jesus' roof</p>	<p>1. There is a bonus healing of a woman in the middle of this story</p> <p>2. Jairus' daughter has died</p>	<p>There are several advocates here, running throughout the region, bringing people for Jesus to heal in the marketplace.</p> <p>Simply touching Jesus' garment made people well</p>	<p>Jesus is healing a Gentile</p> <p>Jesus gives what seems to be a harsh saying to the woman, who understands His point and uses it to advocate for her daughter</p>
Faith	<p>Jesus praised the companions of the paralytic for their faith</p>	<p>1. The faith of the woman is highlighted. Her faith made her well.</p> <p>2. Jairus had faith his daughter could be healed by Jesus</p>	<p>The Kingdom of God is growing. People saw what Jesus could do, and when Jesus came by they brought several others to Jesus to heal in the marketplace</p>	<p>People who witnessed Mark 3:7-10 probably told this woman about Jesus. She had faith in what He could do</p>
After the healing	<p>People glorified God and said, "We have never seen anything like this!"</p>	<p>Jesus is rejected in Nazareth on the Sabbath</p>	<p>The Pharisees who presumably witnessed the healings in the marketplace confronted Jesus because His disciples did not wash their hands before eating</p>	<p>Jesus heals another Gentile in the Decapolis</p>
Other observations				

	Deaf man at the Decapolis	Blind man at Bethsaida	Jesus and the feeding of the 5,000 and 4,000	Man advocating for his son
Passage	Mark 7:31-37	Mark 8:22-26	Mark 6:30-44 and Mark 8:1-10	Mark 9:14-28
Before the healing	Jesus was traveling throughout the region of Tyre and Sidon, and heals the Syrophenician woman's daughter	Jesus warns His disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod, who are blind to the signs Jesus is doing. Jesus' disciples also have a difficult time understanding what is occurring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John the Baptist was murdered at Herod's dinner party, while Jesus' disciples were out working with Him 2. The healing of a deaf man 	
Surprising details	Jesus speaks in Aramaic as He heals. He does not use magic words, as would be expected at the time, but simply says, "Be opened."	The healing took two attempts from Jesus, reflecting the multiple signs people had seen pointing to Him, yet they still struggled to understand who He is	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus fed over 5,000 Jews in the wilderness with only five loaves and two fish 2. Jesus fed around 4,000 people (possibly Gentiles) in the wilderness with only seven loaves of bread and a few small fish 	
Faith	The people probably heard about Jesus from the man that Legion was cast out from. They heard Jesus was there and brought their friend to Him	Sought out Jesus for healing	Two great crowds were following Jesus. Jesus had compassion on them, and did not want them to faint from hunger on their way home	
After the healing	The people proclaim to others what Jesus did for them. Next, "in those days", Jesus feeds the 4,000	Peter realizes that Jesus is the Messiah	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jesus sends His disciples away, and joins them by walking on water 2. The Pharisees 	

			demand a sign from Jesus	
Other observations				

Look back at the story about the Pharisees and the man with the withered hand in Mark 3:1-6. There was not much the Pharisees could do themselves for the man, but they knew Jesus could heal him. Instead of asking Him for help, they watched Jesus, looking for an opportunity to accuse Him of healing on a Sabbath.

4. Reread Mark 3:1-6. With all the examples of the advocates in mind, what do you notice about the Pharisees here? How should this impact our own lives?

Greatness in the Kingdom of God

Finally, at the end of this section, Jesus’ disciples are arguing about “who was the greatest.” It may seem weird for followers of Jesus to argue about who the greatest one among them is, but this is actually a very common problem facing the church ever since its inception. In fact, Paul wrote about this in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 when he discussed quarrels within the Corinthian church that were based on which apostle the individual members were following: Paul, Apollos, or Cephas (Peter). Paul emphasized that we are all to follow Jesus, and that Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were simply messengers. Whenever one church group elevates a leader (or even themselves) while lowering others, it can divert focus from Jesus.

Modern church leaders are all hopefully pointing to Jesus, yet the desire to be first is still seductive. Jesus offers a simple solution to this: “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” Paul expands on this in Ephesians 4:11-13 when he writes that God gave people as gifts to serve the church— apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers— in order to serve and equip believers “for the work of ministry...”.

5. Consider Jesus’ words in Mark 9:35 and read Ephesians 4:11-13. Have you been guilty of what the disciples are doing? Are you actively helping to build up the church body using gifts God has given you? What would it look like if each church member actively served others?

Lesson 17: Mark 9:33-50

In this section we will reread a few lines from the previous lesson, as we continue to the end of chapter 9. Here Jesus' intense teachings continue (remember, He knows He is heading to Jerusalem to be crucified), and He continues to teach about His mission, and the church that will start at His resurrection.

1. Read Mark 9:33-50. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

“If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and a servant of all”

After Jesus says: “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and a servant of all” He takes a child as an example. Children were of a low status in Ancient Near Eastern society (the society in which the disciples and Jesus lived), and Jesus is making a profound point here when He places a child “in the midst of them”: Jesus' disciples are to welcome and serve all, especially those who may seem insignificant or lowly. The Greek word used here for child is also significant: *paidion*. *Paidion* does not simply mean child, but it also contains connotations of someone *in need of training*. Anytime people in need of training come to the church (including children!), the disciples are to receive them, and by receiving them, they are also receiving Jesus and the Father.

The idea that all people are significant in the eyes of God goes all the way back to Genesis 1:26-31, when He created humanity in His image. Humans living after the fall tend to forget this, and we prioritize people we like, while ignoring those we do not like, creating hierarchies based upon our own prejudices. Jesus turns this way of thinking upside down when He brings a child into their midst, and reminds us of the original intention of God: for us to be His representatives on earth.

2. Read Genesis 1:26-31. This is the sixth day of creation, and God is creating humans in His image, His ultimate act of creation. The fact that we are all created in His image and

therefore significant is known as the *imago dei*. Reflect on this truth that all people are significant in the eyes of God. In which areas is it easier for you to see people as the image of God? In which areas is that more difficult for you?

“The One who Is Not Against Us Is for Us”

Jesus' teachings continue when He responds to a comment from John. The disciples saw someone they did not recognize successfully casting out demons in the name of Jesus, and they tried to stop him, presumably to maintain the Apostles' unique status with Jesus. The Apostles do indeed have a unique status, but here Jesus shares two truths:

1. “...no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me.”
2. “The one who is not against us is for us.”

This shows the Kingdom of God is growing faster than the disciples realize. These truths are also very practical for us, especially when we see other churches that may look different from us, worship differently from us, or focus on different things than what we focus on.

3. Considering Jesus said: “The one who is not against us is for us”, how should we respond to other followers of Christ that are different from us?

The Responsibility of Leaders

The final teachings of Jesus in this section revolve around responsibilities of leaders and people in the church. If there are people under your care, that is an awesome responsibility. We have the power to help them know Jesus and God, and we have the power to destroy, corrupt or sin.

We can be the fruitful soil of the kingdom, or we can spread the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. Jesus contrasts a reward for giving even a cup of water to those that belong to Christ with vivid descriptions of destruction and separation addressed to people who lead others astray.

4. How should this affect how we interact with other brothers and sisters in our church context? What thoughts do you have? What questions do you have?

Hell or *Gehenna*?

It can be helpful to know that the word “hell” in Mark 9:47 is a real place on earth with a tragic history. When Jesus uses the word “hell”, He is saying the word *Gehenna*, which is a Greek transliteration of a Hebrew word, *gehinnom*, meaning the valley of Hinnom, a place south of Jerusalem. In this valley, Manasseh, a King of Judah, sacrificed his own children to other gods. Contrast this with the dignity and respect Jesus gives children in the previous verses! Later, Jerusalem used this valley as a dump site, where they would leave trash, remains of dead animals, and bodies of executed criminals. There were fires burning there continually to consume the rubbish and bodies that were dumped. This is truly an awful place. Jesus choosing to compare eternal separation from Him with the Valley of Hinnom is by no means saying that Hell is not real, but rather it is a sign pointing to how awful this separation is.

5. Read 2 Chronicles 33:1-9. When Jesus described eternal separation from Him, he references the same valley in which Manasseh sacrificed his own sons. Why is this significant? How are Manasseh’s actions completely different from Jesus’ teachings?

“Be at Peace with One Another”

Jesus concludes this section with: “Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.” This is the central hinge of the chiasm we are within, that covers Mark 9:2-11:11. Salt had many symbolic meanings in the Old Testament, and could represent Israel’s covenant with God. It was also considered to be a purifying agent, as it was used for preservation. Jesus follows up his talk about salt with the command: Be at peace with one another. Remember, this entire discussion was prompted by someone the twelve did not recognize casting out demons in Jesus’ name.

6. Jesus commanded His followers to be at peace with one another. This can be difficult, especially since the church is so diverse, with people joining from all cultures and parts of the world. What are some practical ways we can live at peace with one another?

Lesson 18: Mark 10:1-22

In these stories Jesus is immediately confronted by the Pharisees regarding divorce. This may seem to be a simple test of Scriptural knowledge followed by Jesus' teaching about divorce (which it is), but it is also a thinly veiled attempt by the Pharisees to destroy Him. Mark writes in this section that Jesus is crossing into Judea and going to the region beyond the Jordan River. This is the same location that John the Baptist focused his ministry until his arrest, which was mentioned back in Mark 1:14. We later find out in Mark 6:17-19 why John was arrested: He had spoken out against Herod regarding his bizarre marriage with his brother's wife, Herodias. With this in mind, it seems likely that the Pharisees were trying to catch Jesus in the same teachings that got John the Baptist arrested and eventually executed. If Jesus also said that what Herod and Herodias did was wrong, Herodias could conceivably develop a grudge against Jesus, have Him arrested, and executed just like John the Baptist.

1. Read Mark 10:1-22. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Jesus brilliantly responds to the Pharisee's test in three ways:

1. Jesus references the law given by Moses in Deuteronomy
2. Jesus explains to the Pharisees the struggle they need to overcome, their own hardness of heart
3. Jesus points back to the ideal of God, which was revealed in the story of creation

Jesus is pointing back to Genesis 1:27 and 2:24, in which a man and woman would come together and be one flesh. These verses come from before mankind's rebellion, and therefore point to God's original intention.

After Jesus' resurrection and the establishment of the early church, Paul writes a letter to the church in Ephesus in which he shares that his mind was blown after reflecting on these same passages in Genesis— he describes it as “this mystery is profound”— in Ephesians 5:28-32. Paul

comes to the realization that the union of a husband and a wife together symbolically represents the union of “Christ and the church”.

2. Read Genesis 1:27, 2:24 and Ephesians 5:28-32. How is the union between a man and a woman like the union of Christ and the church? What other thoughts or observations do you have?

Mark 10:1-22 seems to be connected to Mark 9:36-49 through a chiasm. Both passages contain information related to the church and kingdom of God, a passage about children, and information about what it means to be committed to God. We see a warning about separation from God when Jesus talks about Gehenna (in which He also references Isaiah 66:24), which is contrasted with the Eden ideal and the blessings God is calling us towards.

3. Read Mark 9:36-49 again and compare it with Mark 10:1-22. What observations or questions do you have after comparing these two sections?

It seems odd that Jesus’ disciples are rebuking people for bringing children to Him, especially after Jesus prominently used a child to explain what it means to receive Himself and the Father. However, it could be that Jesus’ disciples have picked up on the intensity of Jesus’ speech and actions, especially when Jesus desired to simply pass through Galilee without people knowing (Mark 9:30). With all this in mind, it can almost seem surprising that Jesus is willing to stop His

journey and bless children, yet that is what Jesus did and again He uses a child to explain about the Kingdom of God.

3. Compare Mark 9:36-37 and Mark 10:14-16. The first connects to receiving people into the church, and the second passage is about receiving the Kingdom of God like a child (the word is again *paidion* in Greek). What observations or questions do you have from these passages?

Another Rich Man

Finally, there is an interesting story about a rich young man who desires to inherit eternal life. Jesus asks the young man if he follows the commandments, and the young man responds that he has always kept the commandments since his youth. It is important to note which commandments Jesus shares, and which ones He does not share. Notice Jesus does not mention the commandment about coveting. This is one the rich young man is struggling with, as he has great possessions that he does not want to lose. In addition, following the commandments is not enough to inherit eternal life. The one thing he, and by extension us, can do to inherit eternal life is follow Jesus.

Think back to Jesus' warnings about cutting off parts of ourselves so that we can enter into life. At this moment in the rich young man's journey he would rather keep his possessions than cut them off in order to follow Jesus to life!

We know that following Jesus is a blessing. We saw Peter, Andrew, James and John immediately follow Jesus in Mark 1:16-20, join Him in His ministry, and participate in His mission. We saw Levi leave his life of collecting taxes and the wealth connected to that in order to follow Jesus in Mark 2:14. When we follow Jesus, it is crucial that we are committed. If we are holding on to anything that keeps us from Him fully, we need to let go of those burdens.

4. Think back to Jesus' comment from Mark 8:36 "For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?" Reflect on your own life. Is there anything you are holding onto that is keeping you from following Jesus? Is there anything you have given up in the past that has kept you from Jesus?

Lesson 19: Mark 10:23-52

The stories in this section come immediately after Jesus tells the rich young ruler what he must do in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus uses this as a shocking teaching opportunity for His disciples, and then explains that they are going to Jerusalem so Jesus can be murdered. James and John then make a request for honor from Jesus, which is followed by the healing of a blind man in a single attempt.

1. Read Mark 10:23-52. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

“I believe; help my unbelief”

Jesus begins this section by reflecting on the rich man’s struggles, saying: “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the Kingdom of God.” This is shocking to the disciples, because Jesus is still combating their worldly expectations, specifically the idea that wealth was evidence of a divine blessing. Their thinking can be summarized like this: wealth is a blessing that must have come from God, so therefore a rich person is living righteously.

Jesus responds to His disciples’ shock by intensifying his saying to: “How difficult it is to enter the Kingdom of God.” Notice He does not repeat the words “it will be for those who have wealth”, which shows that it is difficult for everyone. Thankfully, Jesus replies that it is possible with God. This is critical and connects to the parallel passage found in Mark 9:14-35. Think back to the man whose son had an unclean spirit. Jesus recognizes his lack of faith, and says: “All things are possible for one who believes.” The man then replies: “I believe; help my unbelief”. This is the point when Jesus casts out the unclean spirit, apparently to help the man’s (and those around him) unbelief.

2. Reread Mark 9:14-28 and compare it with Mark 10:23-31. What do you notice? How do the parallel stories in these sections complement each other?

It is important to note the astonishment the disciples are experiencing in Jesus' statements because it points to a larger truth: **Jesus is challenging** and the **Bible is challenging**. As you have probably experienced, the more time you spend with the Bible, carefully going over the commands of Jesus and assessing how well you meet them in your own life, you realize how challenging it truly is. That is why it can be a comfort to see the disciples' struggles, since it was hard for them, too. It is important to remember the words of the man crying out to Jesus: "I believe; help my unbelief." And then, remember Jesus' reply to His disciples in 10:27: "For all things are possible with God."

3. Are there areas of the Bible, or commands from Scripture that you find challenging or hard to believe? How can Jesus' promise: "[A]ll things are possible with God" help us in those areas?

The Request of James and John

Jesus later explains more about His mission in Jerusalem, adds several undignified details regarding what will happen to Him, and none of His disciples rebuke Him this time. It seems they learned their lesson from Jesus' response to Peter's rebuke. Instead, two disciples, James and John, ask Jesus if they can sit at His right hand and at His left hand. They are asking for positions of power, authority, and honor in Jesus' kingdom. We can see how they might have

thought they deserved it: they were part of Jesus' inner circle witnessing the raising of Jairus' daughter and Jesus' transfiguration, two events at which the rest of the disciples were not present.

Jesus responds to James and John by asking if they are ready to follow Him by drinking the cup that He will drink, or being baptized with how He will be baptized. We know He meant, are they ready to die for the Kingdom of God? It may seem clear to us that when Jesus said He was going to die and rise from the dead, that is precisely what He meant. However, Peter, James and John were not sure about what this meant, and questioned its meaning in Mark 9:9. James and John reply to Jesus that they are ready, and He replies that they will indeed follow in this way. In fact, James becomes an early martyr, which is recorded in Acts 12:1-2.

Jesus then teaches that to sit at His right and left is not for Him to grant (and we see in Mark 15:27 that on His left and His right are in fact the robbers crucified next to Him). Furthermore, James' and John's request had unintended consequences amongst the rest of the disciples: they became "indignant at James and John." Jesus uses this opportunity to reinforce the previous lesson on what it means to be great.

4. Reread Mark 9:33-37 and Mark 10:42-44. In these two sections Jesus is redefining what it means to be great. Jesus says Gentiles love to rule over others, but that is not how His disciples are to act. What do you notice about these sections when you compare and contrast them? What is challenging? What is encouraging?

Healing a Blind Man in One Attempt

Finally, we see the healing of a blind man: Bartimaeus. This is an unusual story for several reasons. First, we actually get the man's name, which means that he probably became instrumental in the early church and he would have been familiar to early believers. Secondly, the blind man somehow "sees" that Jesus is the Son of David. This means Bartimaeus

recognized Jesus as the promised Messiah. There is a deep irony here, considering how long it took Jesus' disciples to recognize that fact, and that many people were still completely blind to it even though their eyes worked perfectly.

Next, note that at this point in Mark's Gospel account Jesus does not rebuke the Messianic language or tell Bartimaeus to stop talking. Remember every time Jesus had previously been recognized by people or unclean spirits, He commanded them not to reveal His identity. Jesus' lack of a rebuke reflects the crucial shift in His mission.

Finally, we can also compare Bartimaeus with several other people Jesus met recently: the previous blind man in Mark 8:22-26, the rich young man who Jesus tells to follow Him in Mark 10:21, and the faith of the man whose son had an unclean spirit in Mark 9:24

5. Reread the passages listed in the boxes below. Compare each story with the healing of Bartimaeus and write down observations in each of the boxes in the chart.

Mark 8:22-26 The healing of blind man at Bethsaida	Mark 9:24 The father who struggled with faith	Mark 10:21-22 The command for the rich young man to follow Jesus
What observations or questions do you have after comparing these four stories together?		

Holy Week– Sunday

Lesson 20: Mark 11:1-11

In this lesson we will see the end of the current chiasm, and the beginning of what is known as Holy Week, the week that led to Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. The chiasm we are currently in started with Jesus being re-declared by God to be His Son on a mountain. The chiasm ends on another mountain with people singing Psalm 118, and declaring that Jesus is the son of David, much like Bartimaeus did in the previous lesson. This is important, and points to Jesus' divinity, as well as the fact that He was also fully human. As we study this final week before Jesus' death and resurrection, we will progress from day to day, starting with the Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem.

1. Read Mark 11:1-11. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

This part of Mark has been compared to spy movies, since Jesus shares a secret password that allows His disciples to retrieve a colt “on which no one has ever sat.” We do not know if Jesus simply knew there would be a colt waiting there for Him, or if He somehow set this up prior to arriving to Jerusalem, but that is not the point. The point is what it signifies: Jesus is riding into Jerusalem as King. People in Jerusalem undoubtedly saw connections with Zechariah's poem (Zechariah 9:9) about the return of Israel's king when they saw Jesus riding in, and that is why they placed “leafy branches”, a Jewish nationalist symbol, on the road. Jesus is riding in to take His place as the new King. He immediately goes to the temple, but then does something really unexpected. Since it is late, He just turns around and leaves.

Let's quickly look at the poem from Zechariah 9:9 that the crowd seems to be anticipating. Before we read the poem, it can be helpful to know that Zion is another name for Jerusalem, and Ephraim is often used as a synecdoche to refer to the entire Northern Kingdom of Israel,

which was destroyed by the Assyrians and never returned from exile. Jerusalem is the capital of the Southern Kingdom, remnants of which returned from exile only to be occupied by other nations for hundreds of years, including the Roman occupation that existed during Jesus' ministry.

2. Read Zechariah 9:9-13 and compare the images to Jesus riding on a colt. (The Greek word translated colt here is *polos*, and it can be used to describe a young donkey.) What observations do you have? What questions do you have?

Son of God, Son of David

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, people form a procession before Him and behind Him singing verses from Psalm 118. The procession with Jesus also references "the coming kingdom of our father David", meaning they consider Jesus to be the descendant of David who will restore the kingdom, and liberate them from Rome. As noted before, this passage is the end of a chiasm that began in chapter 9, in which God says that Jesus is "my beloved Son; listen to Him." When we put these two claims together, we see Jesus is both a descendant of David, and also the only Son of God. Finally, we should note that Jesus is no longer telling people to hide his identity, but is allowing it to be proclaimed publicly, and in song, for all to hear.

3. Reread Mark 9:2-9:13 and compare it to Mark 11:1-11. What additional observations or questions do you have? Note that 9:2 begins "After six days". Six days after Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem is when He is publicly crucified.

Psalm 118 is also worthy of study since the procession before and after Jesus is singing lines from Psalm 118:25-26. When the people sing these words in Mark 11:9-10, Mark does not translate “*hosanna*” from the Hebrew and simply transliterates “Hosanna” into Greek letters. In Hebrew, “*hosanna*” means: “Please save!” or “Save now!” These words are most likely fully translated in your Bible’s English translation of Psalm 118, and we can see that Psalm 118:25 reads:

“Save us, we pray, O LORD!
O LORD, we pray, give us success!”

Remember, Jesus’ name in Hebrew is Yeshua, which means “God saves” (or “Yahweh saves”). The meaning of Jesus’ name is closely related to what the people are singing: *hosanna*: “Save us God,” and *yeshua* “God saves”. This fact must have been abundantly clear to Jesus as He rode through Jerusalem. Let’s now turn to Psalm 118. As you read, remember each time you see the word “salvation” in this psalm, it *is* the Hebrew word “*yeshua*”, Jesus’ name in Hebrew.

4. Read Psalm 118. Some of it may be familiar because Jesus will refer to it again when He is talking with the chief priests, scribes and elders in Mark 12. What observations or questions do you have? Why do you think the procession with Jesus was singing this Psalm and these verses in particular?

Holy Week– Monday (and the beginning of Tuesday)

Lesson 21: Mark 11:12-25

After a surprisingly anticlimactic Sunday, Jesus returns to Jerusalem and two highly symbolic events occur. First, He curses a fig tree He sees. Second, Jesus clears out people selling animals for sacrifice in the temple, which predictably causes a reaction from the chief priests and elders.

1. Read Mark 11:12-25. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

The Fig Tree as an Analogy

Both of these stories are odd without context. The fig tree seems almost innocent of Jesus' expectation for food, since Mark writes "it was not the season for figs". However, Jesus was looking for "*anything* on it", and around the time of Passover fig trees should get early figs, which arrive soon after they get their leaves. Mark emphasizes this by mentioning leaves twice in the passage. Jesus sees that this fig tree should be producing fruit since it has leaves, but it is not bearing fruit. So as a symbolic gesture, Jesus curses the fig tree and says: "May no one ever eat fruit from you again." This is an analogy comparing the fruitlessness of the tree with something related to Israel. However, scholars differ on whether or not Jesus is talking to Israel or Judah as a whole, or simply the leaders of Israel, who are prominent in the next story.

Remember, Jesus has also already used bearing fruit as a metaphor in the Parable of the Sower.

2. Reread Mark 4:1-20 again about the Parable of the Sower. How does it connect to Jesus cursing the fig tree? If the fig tree represents the leadership of Israel, what kind of soil would they be? How is this also a warning of us today?

Notice that Mark interrupts the story of the fig tree with the story of Jesus clearing the temple. This technique is known as a “Markan Sandwich” and actually occurs at least four times in his Gospel account: the story of Jesus’ family is interrupted by scribes declaring Jesus is in league with demons, the story of the healing of Jairus’ daughter is interrupted by the healing of the bleeding woman, the story of Jesus sending out the twelve Apostles is interrupted by the beheading of John the Baptist, and the story of the fig tree is interrupted by Jesus clearing the money-changers out of the temple

2a. Study and complete chart below featuring the Markan sandwiches.

	Mark 3:20-35	Mark 5:21-43	Mark 6:7-32	Mark 11:12-25
Surrounding Story	Jesus’ family is worried about Him since He is not even able to eat. They think he is “out of His mind”, and try to come and get Him. Jesus uses this to teach that His family is “whoever does the will of God.”	Jesus is met by a great crowd and Jairus, one of the rulers of the local synagogue. Jairus begs Jesus to come and help his daughter. Jesus does help his daughter after she dies. He then raises her to life.	Jesus sent His Apostles out with authority to continue His mission and ministry. His Apostles are able to cast out many demons and heal many sick people. However, they do not get a chance to rest or even eat, so Jesus tells them to “come away... and rest a while.	Jesus curses a fig tree for not having fruit and proving to be unproductive. The fig tree then “wither[s] away to its roots”. Jesus uses this as a teaching moment. He emphasizes the importance of faith in God, and talks about throwing “this mountain”, meaning Jerusalem, “into the sea”. Jesus

				then emphasizes prayer, and that while His disciples pray they are to also forgive “so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.”
How the main story ends	“[W]hoever does the will of God” is Jesus’ family	Jesus raises a person to life.	Jesus offers rest to those who are continuing His ministry (people clearly doing the will of God).	Jesus emphasizes faith, prayer, and the critical nature of forgiveness within prayer.
Interrupting Story	Scribes show up and declare that everything Jesus is doing is from the power of demons. Jesus counters this with a strict warning about blaspheming against the Holy Spirit.	A bleeding woman has faith that if she simply touches Jesus’ garment she will be healed. She does this, and is healed. Jesus tells her that her “faith has made [her] well”.	Herod murders John the Baptist during his birthday feast. John the Baptist’s head is subsequently served on a platter.	Jesus goes to the temple, overturns the tables of the money-changers and teaches in the temple. This antagonizes the chief priest and scribes.
Main figure(s) within the interrupting story, and the goals of the main figure(s)				

2b. After studying this chart of the Markan sandwiches, what observations do you have? What is Mark emphasizing with these four stories?

A House of Prayer or a Den of Robbers?

People at the temple had set up stations where others could buy animals to offer in sacrifice at the temple. This helped the temple to function, and the money-changers charged a slight tax on the animals they sold. After Jesus overturns the tables of the money-changers, he subsequently teaches people while referencing two passages from the Old Testament. Jesus is equating the practices of the people at the temple with a passage from Jeremiah 7, and He calls them a “den of robbers”. He then contrasts this with a poem from Isaiah which describes the purpose of the temple as a “house of prayer for all nations”. This causes the chief priests and the scribes to want to destroy Jesus, which is exactly what the Pharisees and Herodians set out to do in Mark 3:6 when Jesus healed the man with a withered hand. We can see darkness has been building up around Jesus, and is now gathering to surround Him.

To help us understand the ideal purpose for the temple, we will read the poem Jesus is referencing which is Isaiah 56:1-8. In this poem two people groups are identified: the foreigner, who is separated from God, and the eunuch (or people unable to have children). In Genesis, the family of Abraham was promised land from God, and in order to maintain that land, and therefore the promise, children were necessary. This is why a widow was supposed to marry a brother of her husband, so she could bear children for her dead husband in order to continue living on the land of the promise. If a family did not have children, their name would disappear. This is a genuine problem and concern for people who could not have children, like eunuchs. Notice also the emphasis on keeping the Sabbath. Remember, the Sabbath was there to help God’s people to know Him, that He is their creator and liberator.

3. Read Isaiah 56:1-8, then fill in the chart below.

	Foreigner	Eunuch
Fear	Isaiah 56:3	Isaiah 56:3
God’s Commands	Isaiah 56:6	Isaiah 56:4

God's Promises	Isaiah 56:5, 7, 8	
Other thoughts or questions		

However, like the fig tree the people in Israel were not bearing fruit, and Jesus refers to the temple, which should have been “a house of prayer for all peoples”, as a “den of robbers”. This is another reference from the Old Testament, Jeremiah 7. This was written around the time of the exile, and describes Jeremiah’s perspective from standing “in the gate of the LORD’s house”, which is the temple.

The temple Jesus is in is not the same as the one that Jeremiah was in. Jesus is in the second temple, built after some Jews returned from exile, and expanded under King Herod the Great. It was only completed a few years prior to Jesus’ standing in it. The first temple, the one that Jeremiah is in, was destroyed after Judah (the Southern Kingdom) falsely trusted in their special relationship with God to save them, despite continuing to live in rebellion and sin while ignoring the prophets sent to critique and warn them.

4. Read Jeremiah 7:1-15. What sins specifically are mentioned? How does continually doing these acts and returning to the temple make the temple a “den of robbers”?

Holy Week–Tuesday

Lesson 22: Mark 11:27-12:27

The first thing you may notice is that there is no Mark 11:26! This may seem scandalous, but verse 26 is not there for a very good reason: scholars are able to determine which manuscripts of Mark (and other Biblical books) are the oldest, and therefore the closest to the message Mark and the other original authors intended to convey. The reason scholars are able to figure this out is that there are more existing copies of ancient manuscripts about Jesus than for any other person from the ancient world, and it is not even close. If you are wondering what the missing verse is, chances are your Bible contains Mark 11:26 in the footnotes. If not, here it is: “But if you do not forgive, neither will your father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” If you put that phrase back into the passage, it does not have any impact on the message or theology of Mark’s Gospel account.

In this passage, we are going to focus on three different groups testing Jesus in the temple, and His response to all three groups. Here is some background on the Jewish groups testing Jesus:

1. The chief priests, scribes, and elders helped run the temple
2. The Sadducees held the political power, claimed they descended from David, and only accepted the first five books of the Bible as authoritative
3. The Pharisees accepted the entire Old Testament as authoritative, and desired the power that the Sadducees had
4. The Herodians were people who supported King Herod Antipas, and, by association, Roman rule

1. Read Mark 11:27-12:27. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

2. Jesus is challenged by three different coalitions. Fill in the chart, then write down any observations or questions you have.

	Chief Priests, Scribes and Elders	Pharisees and Herodians	Sadducees
Challenging Question			
Jesus' Response			
Other Observations or Questions			

After Jesus responds to the challenge of the chief priests, scribes, and elders, He shares a parable about a vineyard. The chief priests, scribes, and elders knew Jesus “had told the parable against them”. One big reason for this is that several elements of this parable occur in Isaiah 5:1-7, in which Isaiah compares Israel with a vineyard.

3. Read Isaiah 5:1-7 and Mark 12:1-12

	Isaiah 5:1-7	Mark 12:1-12
Evidence the vineyard is well cared for		

Problem with the vineyard		
Solution to the Problem		

The Cornerstone

Notice that Jesus quotes from Psalm 118, which is the same psalm the procession sang as He entered Jerusalem. Jesus quotes:

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone
This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.”

A cornerstone is a stone that is perfectly cut, and laid at the corner of a building. It must be perfectly cut because the rest of the building will be built off of it. If the cornerstone is not level horizontally or straight vertically, the building will be in danger of collapsing. Jesus is the cornerstone that is needed. Isaiah explains why in Isaiah 28:17. The horizontal line from the cornerstone is justice, *mishpat* in Hebrew. The plumb line (the vertical line pointing up towards God) of the cornerstone is righteousness, *tsedeqah* in Hebrew. Consider how many times we have already read about justice and righteousness, *mishpat* and *tsedeqah*, as we studied passages from the Old Testament.

Biblical justice, *mishpat*, and Biblical righteousness, *tsedeqah*, are both critical concepts. Biblical justice can refer to getting what you deserve, which is retributive justice, but it also means caring for those who are vulnerable, which is restorative justice. Think about all the times we have read about caring for the sojourner, orphan, widow, and poor (we first saw this in Malachi 3:5 and just this in Jeremiah 7!).

Biblical righteousness is about having a right relationship with God, and it is also having a right relationship with people. Both relationships are critical, because people are made in the image of God, which guarantees a certain level of dignity. Jesus is the only one to truly embody and exhibit Biblical justice and righteousness, and therefore He is the cornerstone that is needed. From Him we too can experience and reflect true Biblical *mishpat* and *tsedeqah*.

*For more information check out Bible Project's "Justice" Biblical Theme Video

4. Consider all the times we have read about Justice and Righteousness so far. Passages containing calls for Justice and Righteousness are referred to throughout Mark's Gospel account (look at Isaiah 5:7, Jeremiah 7:5, Isaiah 56:1, Psalm 118:19, and Zechariah 9:9 for some examples we have studied). Clearly *mishpat* and *tsedeqah* are important. How have we seen Jesus– the cornerstone from which we measure Justice and Righteousness– living out these ideals?

5. How should this emphasis on justice and righteousness affect our own lives?

Word Studies

One skill to develop in Bible study is that of how to do a word study. To do this we can use free online tools to see how author's used different words in the Bible.

Some free tools include biblehub.com, blueletterbible.org, biblestudytools.com, and netbible.org.

If you use these tools, you can see how authors, such as Mark, used certain words throughout their work. For example, Mark uses the word *peirazó*, meaning “to test”, four times in his Gospel account. If we analyze each time that word is used, we can develop a more precise understanding of what Mark means when he uses that word, and we can compare different stories in which that word appears. By doing this, we can see that the Pharisees ask Jesus for a test of His power by asking for a sign, followed by test about divorce (which is connected to Herod, Herodias, and sex), followed by a test about money. They are testing Jesus regarding power, sex, and money. Some things never change.

Study the chart below showing all the times Mark uses the word *peirazó*. Then answer the questions below the chart. In the chart the word *peirazó* replaces its English translation.

	Mark 1:13	Mark 8:11	Mark 10:2	Mark 12:15
Sentence with <i>peirazó</i>	“And He was in the wilderness forty days, being <i>peirazó</i> by Satan”	“The Pharisees came to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven to <i>peirazó</i> Him.”	“And Pharisees came up and in order to <i>peirazó</i> Him asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?’”	“But, knowing their hypocrisy, [Jesus] said to them, “Why put me to the <i>peirazó</i> ? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.”
Who is doing the testing?	Satan	Pharisees	Pharisees	Pharisees and Herodians
Where is the testing happening?	Wilderness	The district of Dalmanutha (on the Sea of Galilee)	The region of Judea and beyond the Jordan	The temple
What is significant about the location?	Mirrored where the Israelites were tested in the exodus narrative	Dalmanutha is near where Jesus did most of His teaching	This is where John the Baptist did his preaching, and was most likely arrested	This is God’s home on earth
Who is being tested?	Jesus	Jesus	Jesus	Jesus

6. Jesus is always the one tested in Mark's Gospel. He is tested by Satan (we learn from Matthew and Luke He was tested three times), and Jesus is tested three times by some of the religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees. What observations can you make from this chart, either about the word *peirazó*, or about how *peirazó* is used by Mark. Do you have any other observations or questions?

Holy Week–Tuesday

Lesson 23: Mark 12:28-44

The Tuesday before the crucifixion was a busy day for Jesus, and will continue to be described until the end of Mark 13. This lesson we will read Mark 12:28-44. This passage starts with a scribe legitimately asking Jesus about what the greatest commandment is, as opposed to simply another test to try to trap Jesus. This must have been a welcome relief from the questions that had plagued the day so far, and the scribe is rewarded with a brief moment discussing Scripture with God. Jesus then figuratively turns the tables on the people present, and rhetorically asks them for a Scriptural interpretation of Psalm 110, before comparing and contrasting the scribes with a widow.

1. Read Mark 12:28-12:44. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Jesus' conversation with the scribe is a very bright moment in a very dark day. The scribe seems to genuinely want to know what Jesus has to say regarding what the greatest commandment is. Jesus responds by quoting the *Shema*, and then referencing a passage out of Leviticus. Jesus says these two commands are the most important, and therefore it is important for us to know them.

2. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (also known as the Shema which means “listen” or “hear” in Hebrew) and Leviticus 19:18. These are what Jesus is referencing when He answers the scribe’s question. Study the passages and write down any observations you have in the chart below.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5	Leviticus 19:18

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After Jesus shares the greatest commandment, the scribe gets a special opportunity with Jesus: he gets to briefly converse with Jesus about theology. We see this because the scribe's response is a reference to several passages in the Old Testament, Hosea 6:6, and Micah 6:6-8. We already looked at Hosea 6:1-6 when we studied the party at Levi/ Matthew's house.

4. Reread Hosea 6:1-6 or Micah 6:6-8. These passages are about what God desires, and when the scribe mentions this Jesus replies, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." How should these passages affect how we live our lives?

"Love"

The word "love" is a difficult word to define, especially in English. We can use the word love to describe how we feel about food, sports teams, and other people. It is a word so overburdened with range that it can lose all meaning. Love must mean something, because we are to love God fully, and love our neighbor as ourselves. How do we do that? Fortunately for us, Paul wrote a beautiful definition of what the word love (*agape* in Greek) means. This passage is 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

3. Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-13. Then fill out the chart below that defines what love is and what love is not.

Love is...	Love is not...

After studying what love is, and what love is not, we can apply this to Jesus’ approach to the challenges He received from the high priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees. These people tested Jesus’ authority, tried to trap Him in order to condemn Him, and confronted His understanding of Scripture. Jesus’ responses are more than just pithy retorts; He is actually responding in love. He knows they are going to kill him in three days, yet He uses this time to patiently reveal to the chief priests, elders, and scribes that they fear people more than God. He warns the Pharisees and Herodians about the images on their money, suggesting that they may actually be devoting themselves to Money and not to God. He teaches and illuminates something better than the Sadducees current understanding of Scripture, and what New Creation means.

Did Jesus’ loving approach make a difference? There is evidence that Jesus’ approach did in fact make a difference. We will read in Mark 15:43 that Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the very council that will work to condemn Jesus, will later gather up courage to ask to take Jesus’ body from the cross and place Him respectfully into a tomb. This action by Joseph demonstrates that he was influenced somehow by Jesus, and responded ultimately with courage.

*The council was known as the Sanhedrin. It consisted of 71 members, and was most likely set up after the return from exile. The members of the Sanhedrin were both Sadducees and Pharisees. Therefore Joseph was Sadducee or a Pharisee

4. Have you ever experienced people challenging you in the way they challenged Jesus? How can Jesus’ response towards all of these challenges influence, guide, and encourage us?

“The LORD says to my Lord”

After Jesus' conversation with the scribe, he then teaches in the temple again, and again He uses Scripture to teach. In this case He is using Psalm 110, and asks a question: what does “The Lord said to my Lord” mean? This can be confusing in Greek, but in Hebrew it is more clear. In the Hebrew of Psalm 110 it says: “The LORD says to my Lord”. LORD is actually “Yahweh” in Hebrew, God's divine name, so David is writing in the psalm (through the Holy Spirit, Jesus adds): “Yahweh said to my lord”.

This leads to the essence of Jesus' question. Who is the LORD talking to that David considers to be *his* lord? Is it the promised Messiah, from 2 Samuel 7? If so, why would David call this promised Messiah “lord”, since the Messiah would *descend* from David? Shouldn't David be lord over all his descendants? The only explanation is if the Messiah comes from David's line *yet* also pre-exists David eternally as God. It only makes sense if the Messiah is God.

5. Read Psalm 110. There is disagreement over some parts of this psalm, but this psalm is important to Jesus. What observations or questions do you have about Psalm 110?

Finally, Jesus contrasts the scribes with a widow in Mark 12:38-44. The scribes are described with opulence and seek honor, while the widow is described very plainly. Yet, Jesus focuses on the widow's offering.

6. Think about what we have read about widows already in the prophets, and how part of *mishpat* (Hebrew justice) is taking care of widows. What point is Jesus making by comparing the scribes with the widow? How should we apply this to our own lives?

7. Let's revisit the goal mentioned at the beginning of this book. Has your love for God increased? Has your love for your neighbor increased? No matter what the answer is, pray honestly and earnestly for God's help in both these areas.

Holy Week–Tuesday

Lesson 24: Mark 13

You have undoubtedly noticed headings throughout your Bible. These can helpfully provide at-a-glance anchor points to let you know what section you have turned to when you open your Bible. However, the headings were not put there by the original authors, but inserted by modern translators. Because of that, headings can sometimes lead to confusion or piece-meal readings of the Bible. That danger is very present in Mark 13, because the headings can make it seem like several separate events are occurring, when in fact it is one long, continuous passage.

In Mark 13 we will read about one of Jesus' disciples pointing out the grandeur of the temple (and indeed it was grand. King Herod the Great had worked hard at expanding and enriching the temple complex). However, Jesus knows that His rejection by the Jewish leaders and His subsequent death foreshadow the choice the Jewish people will make later. They will continue to follow a path of rebellion which will lead to the destruction of the temple by Roman forces in AD 70.

Jesus' four original disciples, "Peter and James and John and Andrew" then ask Him two questions:

1. When will these things be?
2. What will be the sign when all these things are about to be accomplished?

Jesus spends most of Mark 13 explaining when the temple will be destroyed and the six signs that will precede its destruction. He then references Daniel 7 by talking about the coming of the "Son of Man ...in clouds", and follows that up with another warning to pay attention to the signs and to be ready.

1. Read Mark 13:1-37. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Signs Warning about the Destruction of the Temple

In Mark 13:5-23 Jesus gives six signs for people to look for before the temple is destroyed. This can be very cryptic, especially because Jesus is prophetically explaining about the future. Having good commentaries (which you may have to pay for since free ones online often do not contain the most current scholarship) alongside study Bibles is important, especially when it comes to events that will take place after they are mentioned. With these tools, we can see how the six events mentioned by Jesus do occur before the destruction of the Temple.

2. Look at the chart below which lists all six signs Jesus says will occur before the destruction of the Temple. Next to each of those signs is an example of the event happening before the temple's destruction. There is not a consensus regarding this, and that is why more than one commentary is helpful. The commentaries I have been using are *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* by R. Alan Cole, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* by Eckhard J. Schnabel, *New Bible Commentary 21st Century Edition*, and *The New Testament in its World* by N.T. Wright and Michael Bird.

Sign	Event before the destruction of the temple	Other observations, thoughts, questions, or notes from other sources
Mark 13:6, 21-22 False messiahs will come	Several pretenders did come, including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theudas, a Samaritan 2. Judas, of Galilee 3. An unnamed Egyptian Jew Judas is mentioned in Acts 5:46, and the unnamed Egyptian Jew is mentioned in Acts 21:38	
Mark 13:7-8 Wars and rumors of wars	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. War in Armenia in AD 33 2. War between Rome and Parthia in AD 36 3. War between Herod Antipas and King Aretas IV in AD 36 4. A rebellion in Mauretania in AD 42 	

Mark 13:8 Earthquakes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An earthquake in Philippi in AD 49 2. An earthquake in Palestine before AD 60 3. An earthquake in Asia Minor in AD 61 4. An earthquake in Rome in AD 67 	
Mark 13:8 Famines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Famine in Rome in AD 41 2. A large famine in Judea in AD 46, which is mentioned in Acts 11:28. 	
Mark 13:9-13 Persecution	<p>After Jesus' resurrection, persecution was present. Peter and John were arrested for speaking before people, James and Stephen were martyred, and Paul was arrested. However, the Gospel continued to be proclaimed, just like what Jesus declared</p>	
Mark 13:14 The abomination of desolation	<p>This could be many things. One possibility is an attempt by the Roman Emperor Caligula to place a statue of himself in the temple in AD 40. However, he died before that occurred. Therefore the abomination (his statue) never made it to the temple.</p> <p>Jesus could also be referring to AD 67 when Jewish Zealots</p>	

	(violent Jewish revolutionaries) led an armed revolt, took over the temple mount, and usurped power from the priests. This event led to the Romans violently and brutally responding, and they destroyed the temple in AD 70.	
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By the time all six of these signs had occurred, it was indeed important to get out of Jerusalem and Judea, because it was a warzone. Jesus emphasizes this warning in Mark 13:28-31: just like the fig tree gives signs through its leaves, pay attention to these signs because all these events were going to happen while members of the current generation were still alive. Jesus therefore urges them to “stay awake”.

The Day of the Lord

Jesus also uses vivid language about the skies going dark in Mark 13:24-27 to describe the coming of the “Son of Man in clouds”. When Jesus is speaking here, He is talking about His return, and is referencing a well known motif from the Old Testament: The Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is often associated with storm clouds darkening the skies, judgment, and seismic situations on earth (much like the earthquakes Jesus mentioned in Mark 13:8). The Day of the Lord may seem scary, but it offers hope to followers of Jesus, because the oppressive powers will be judged. It is helpful to remember that no matter how awful things get, the Day of the Lord is coming, and Jesus is returning. For those of us who put our faith in Jesus, the Day of the Lord represents hope. The warning to “stay awake” aptly applies to us as well.

3. Study the chart below. In it different descriptions of the Day of the Lord are compared from the Old Testament, alongside Jesus’ description in Mark 13:24-27.

	Isaiah 13	Ezekiel 32	Joel 2	Mark 13:24-27
Cosmic light changes/ Coming Storms	Stars and constellations will not offer light Sun and moon will be dark	Heavens will be covered Stars will be dark The sun will be covered with a cloud and there will be no light from the moon	Darkness, gloom Sun and moon will darken Stars will withdraw their shining	The sun will not give light, and the moon will not give light.

Noise	Loud cry and the sound of armies gathering	Wail (in Ezekiel 30)	A trumpet blowing in Zion (Jerusalem)	Trumpet sounds as angels gather people (mentioned in Matthew 24:31)
Location	Babylon	Egypt	Zion (Jerusalem)	Unclear, but it will be seen worldwide
Purpose/ Judgment	Judgment against Bablyon: they were arrogant and ruthless	Against Egypt, they were ruthless	Judgment against Zion, with the door open for people to return to God	To judge the world and gather His people
Something Seismic	Heavens will tremble and the Earth shakes	Land desolation, like a collapsing tree	Inhabitants and the heavens tremble and the earth quakes	The stars will fall from heaven. The powers in heaven will be shaken

As you can see, the language Jesus uses is very similar to what the Old Testament prophets used when they spoke about the Day of the Lord, which connects to judgment. Babylon was judged for what they did; Egypt was judged for what they did. Even Israel was judged for their generations of rebellion, and how they refused to turn back to God. This eventually led to their Exile.

3. Study the chart above. What do you notice? What questions do you have? How should this affect our lives?

“One Like a Son of Man”

Jesus also describes His return using language from visions recorded in Daniel 7:9-14. This passage contains many verses connecting to Jesus and His return. For examples we see in verse 9 there are “Thrones” in heaven, which is plural. Why is there more than one throne? Next, in verse 13 there is a Son of Man coming on a cloud to the Ancient of Days (the Ancient of

Days is God). This Son of Man is then given an eternal kingdom for all people in verse 14. The Son of Man is therefore a king, and connects back to the plural thrones in verse 9.

4. Read Daniel 7:9-14. There is confusing language here, but several main ideas will pop out. How do these verses connect to Jesus? What else do you notice? What questions do you have?

Thus ends what must have been an exhausting Tuesday.

Holy Week–Wednesday

Lesson 25: Mark 14:1-25

At least two things resulted from the Tuesday before Jesus' death and resurrection:

1. The chief priests and scribes wanted to arrest Jesus in order to kill Him
2. Jesus must have been exhausted

In Mark 14:1-11, we see the plot to arrest Jesus move forward in secret, as well as a story about a woman anointing Jesus with an expensive ointment.

1. Read Mark 14:1-11. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

You probably noticed that Mark 14:1-2 and 14:10-11 are about arresting Jesus, while 14:3-9 are about Jesus being anointed, people responding indignantly to His anointing, while Jesus responding positively. The verses about Jesus being arrested are connected to what happens in between. This passage starts with the chief priests and scribes wanting to arrest Jesus, and ends with Judas Iscariot going to the chief priests to arrange Jesus' arrest. What happens in the middle is very important.

2. Study Mark 14:3-9. What happened here that may have caused Judas Iscariot to go and betray Jesus? Mark does not tell us, but simply leaves several clues.

Holy Week–Thursday (and possibly the start of Friday)

Mark's Gospel account moves on to Thursday, and we can feel it accelerating towards its conclusion. Jesus again tells two disciples to use what appears to be a password in order to secure a room in which they can celebrate the Passover. Just like Jesus acquiring the donkey in Mark 11:1-11, we are uncertain if Jesus set this up beforehand or simply knew that this room was available. Regardless, Jesus and His disciples find this place and prepare for His final Passover meal.

We would consider this meal to occur on Thursday, since in our thinking the day changes at midnight. However, Jewish thinking sees the day change at sundown. Therefore, Jesus and His disciples may have considered their celebration to be taking place on the Friday of Passover week. At this Passover meal, Jesus reveals He knows someone will betray Him, and institutes the Lord's Supper which Christians still practice to this day in remembrance of Jesus and the New Covenant.

3. Read Mark 14:12-25. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

The New Covenant

It is highly significant that Jesus is inaugurating the New Covenant during Passover, since the original Passover event— when God brought down the tenth and final plague against Pharaoh and Egypt in order to liberate His people from enslavement— led directly to the covenant God made with the family of Israel.

Jesus knows He is again liberating people from enslavement. This time not liberation from Egypt, but liberation from sin and death. Jesus repurposes the elements of the original Passover, a lamb and its blood, and gives them new meaning at the Last Supper. No longer will just one family, Israel, be freed from the oppression of another, but a member of Israel, Jesus,

will liberate all of mankind. Exodus 12:1-13, describes the role of the lamb and its blood. Notice that Exodus 12:4 makes provisions for what to do if a household is too small to have a lamb. This can lead to the question: What if the household is too big? What if the household is God's household, as we read about in the poem in Isaiah 56:1-8?

Let's read Exodus 12:1-13. In this section, God has already declared that a tenth and final plague will come: the death of the firstborn. God gives Moses instruction for all of Israel so that when God comes down, He will not send the "destroyer" (Exodus 12:23) into their houses. In order for God to *pass over* their houses, the Israelites are to take the sacrificed lamb's blood and place it on their doors frames.

4. Read Exodus 12:1-13 and compare it to Mark 14:22-25. How is Jesus repurposing the meal and the blood of Passover for the New Covenant that we share with Him? Complete the table below.

	Exodus 12:1-13	Mark 14:22-25
Meal	The meal is the lamb shared by people.	
Blood	The blood is to be placed on the door frames of the Israelite houses, so that God will pass over those houses, while rendering judgment onto the Egyptians.	
People are freed from...	Slavery to Egypt	Slavery to sin and death
God's role	Judge and liberator	Judge and liberator
Other Observations or questions		

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The New Covenant is the covenant that Jesus made with His disciples, and also with us. Think back to studying Jeremiah 31:31-34. This is the New Covenant that may have been hinted at in the first meal in Mark's Gospel account, back in Mark 2:13-26. This meal originally seemed like a nice teaching opportunity for Jesus, but it's meaning is developed as we study Jesus' Last Supper. The wedding party is about to come to an end, because the bridegroom is now about to be "taken from them". This is precisely the point when Jesus initiates the New Covenant.

5. Reread Mark 2:13-26 and compare Jesus' first mentioned meal with His last. There are several strong connections between the two meals. What observations do you notice? What questions do you have?

Holy Week–Friday

Lesson 26: Mark 14:26-72

The Friday of Holy Week was an eventful day for Jesus and His disciples. This passage starts with Jesus praying with His disciples in a garden, during which He asks the Father “If it were possible, the hour might pass from Him” and to “[r]emove this cup from me.” Many people will look at Jesus’ death and minimize it because He was only dead for a few days before His resurrection. However, when we see the hesitancy present in Jesus’ prayer, we can sense the terror that Jesus actually felt regarding what was going to happen to Him: people would arrest Him, beat Him, hold Him down, and force His arms onto a plank of wood while they nailed Him to it. Thinking about this experience, even if temporary, is terrifying, and Jesus asked the Father to provide another way. However, Jesus then says: “Yet not what I will, but what You will.” Echoes from Abraham almost sacrificing Isaac in Genesis 22 on Mount Moriah (which *is* where Jerusalem would eventually be built *and* where Jesus is about to be crucified) and God providing a ram seem to underscore Jesus’ hope and petition at this moment.

After this, Jesus is arrested, and sent to a sham trial. The chief priests and elders know it is a sham because none of the witnesses they called could agree on their testimony, and so they finally just accept false testimony: “We heard Him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another.’” Jesus never says this in Mark, though in John 2:19, after the cleansing of the temple, Jesus does say something similar to it: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” In this passage Jesus is talking about His body, but people chose to twist His words into a false accusation.

During this trial Peter, who earlier swore that He would stay with Jesus to the point of death, denies Him three times.

1. Read Mark 14:26-72. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Putting the Sword away

After Jesus' prayer in the garden, Judas leads a crowd of armed people to Jesus. Someone, identified in John's Gospel account as Peter, cuts the ear off the servant of the high priest. At this point in John's Gospel account, Jesus tells Peter to *put the sword away*. This whole scene is an inversion of every other scene in Mark's Gospel account that involves a crowd: Usually when a crowd approaches Jesus, they are seeking Him for healing and restoration. Here they seek to kill Him.

In addition, this whole scene bears some striking similarities to Genesis 3.

2. Read Genesis 3, and then study the chart below. Fill in the sections below with your observations or questions.

	Genesis 3	Mark 14:32-49
Location	Garden of Eden	Garden of Gethsemane
Who is present	God, people, and a deceiver	Jesus, people, one of which is a betrayer
Sword	The sword is set up to protect the way to the tree of life	The sword is put away (Matthew 26:52, John 18:11)
Source of Life	The Tree of Life in the center of the Garden	Jesus, who is in the middle of a garden
Other Observations or questions		

After Jesus is arrested He is brought before the high priests, chief priests, scribes, and elders. They desire to hurt Him, and eventually kill Him. This is their plan to stop Jesus. Keep in mind the Parable of the Strong Man that Jesus told the scribes back in Mark 3:27. At the time Jesus said the parable, He was referring to how He was overcoming the powers of Satan and darkness to plunder their goods, meaning to liberate people oppressed by them. Think of all the people Jesus freed during His ministry.

The Strongest Man

Jesus is also a “strong man”, and the forces of darkness, the powers, are all going to try to bind Him with death, their most powerful weapon. But Jesus cannot be bound by them, and defeats death itself through His resurrection. This ensures that those that are in His household (think back to Isaiah 56:1-8 and Mark 11:17 again) will never be plundered by those same forces of darkness. We may still be tempted by darkness to fall away like Peter did that night, but we can never be stolen from Jesus.

In Romans 8:37-39, Paul poetically describes the truth that nothing can separate us away from God’s love:

“...in all these things we are more than conquerors.
For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers,
nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

3. Reflect on how Mark 3:27 connects to what the high priest, chief priests, elders, and scribes are trying to do. As you do this, keep in mind Romans 8:37-39. We know Jesus has won the victory and can never be defeated. Through Him, we are “more than conquerors”. How should this affect our own lives?

Peter’s Three Denials of Jesus

One final aspect of Mark 14:66-72 is Peter’s denial of Jesus. Peter knows Jesus is the Messiah (Mark 8:28), and feels his own strong loyalty to Jesus will keep him from falling away. This is a fact he emphasizes in Mark 14:31. However, the events of that night are so disorienting that Peter ends up denying Jesus three times. From our perspective, it can be easy to be disappointed with Peter’s reactions; however, if we read the descriptions of that night, it was clearly a terrifying experience:

1. A gang of armed people arrive by torchlight to arrest Jesus. Torches cast a jagged and dancing light that can be bewildering
2. Jesus is brought to the temple, during which there must have been a flurry of activity as the high priest, chief priests, elders, and scribes sent for people all over Jerusalem to testify against Jesus
3. People are beating Jesus in the temple
4. The night was cold, and people had to light a fire to keep warm. The inconsistent light from a fire next to the darkness can also be disorienting, especially when you do not know whom you can trust and are shivering from the cold

Imagining all of this together can help us sympathize with Peter during that time. He is human, like us, and therefore this is an important warning to us all, and should inspire us to constantly be in prayer and relationship with God. God will not abandon us, but we can be distracted and disoriented by things in this world.

4. Think about the events leading up to Peter's denials of Jesus. How can we use this to help guide our own walks with Jesus? What should we take away from this event?

Holy Week– Friday

Lesson 27: Mark 15

The Jewish and Roman leaders were usually antagonistic, but they united in agreement in one thing: thinking that crucifying Jesus was good.

The chief priests and the council desired the death of Jesus, and had spent much of the previous chapter trying to find testimony for which Jesus could be executed. They finally found it when Jesus said, “*Ego eimi*” (I am), which can be understood as the Greek translation of the divine name of God. This caused the high priest to tear his clothes in response, and they declared that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy.

At this time the Jewish leaders did not have authority to execute anyone due to the Roman occupation, so in order to execute Jesus they would need to get the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate involved. Pontius Pilate does not seem convinced by the charges against Jesus, and tries to set Him free. At this point the Jewish people have a choice: free Jesus, the Son of God, or Barabbas, a murderer and insurrectionist. They chose the murderer and insurrectionist.

Jesus is subsequently mocked, lifted up to be crucified, and dies. To prevent his body being left out through the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the council who seems to disagree with the rest of the council, took Jesus’ body, and placed it into a tomb.

1. Read Mark 15. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Which Jesus?

When Pontius Pilate is trying to free Jesus, who he feels is *not* deserving of capital punishment, he offers a choice to the Jewish crowd: would they rather have Jesus (who we know is the Son of God) or Barabbas; Barabbas likely means “son of the father” in Aramaic. You may have heard

that Barabbas' first name is Jesus. This comes from Matthew 27:16-17. The inclusion of Barabbas' first name is not consistent within all modern Bible translations, though it is consistently mentioned in several ancient sources, and early church fathers such as Origen did write about it. Therefore, assuming that Barabbas' first name is also Jesus (which was a fairly common name back in the first century), the Jewish people had a choice between Jesus, the Son of God, or Jesus, the son of the father. This choice has profound consequences, since they chose to free Barabbas, the son of the father. Barabbas was a rebel and his fathers, the family of Israel, had been in consistent rebellion with God. Symbolically, this means the people requesting to free Barabbas chose once again to remain in rebellion to God. This mindset eventually led to the Jewish revolt, which culminated in Rome destroying the temple in AD 70.

*For more information about this, check out Bible Project's podcast, "Two Men Named Jesus"

2. The people chose Jesus Barabbas, the rebel son of the father, instead of Jesus, the Son of God. They chose a violent revolutionary instead of God. Remember we too were in rebellion against God until we repented, and turned to His love. How should this lesson affect us?

Jesus' crucifixion also bears several striking connections with the descriptions of making an idol located in a poem in Jeremiah 10. In this poem, Jeremiah describes the process of people using their skills to create an idol, and how futile that is. We can compare Jesus' crucifixion with Jeremiah 10 and see that people seem to be trying to create a god they can nail down and control. It is reminiscent of when Israel was in the wilderness, and made the golden calf. In that story, located in Exodus 32, people use their skills to make an idol, which Aaron declares represents the gods "who brought [them] out of Egypt!" He then proclaims they will have a feast on the following day to the golden calf, which he calls Yahweh (Exodus 32:5). In many ways, the golden calf rebellion was Israel trying to make a god they could control.

3. Read Jeremiah 10:1-10 and compare it to the details Mark gives in Mark 15:16-32. What similarities do you notice? What differences do you notice? What does it mean that we worship a God who is too large to be controlled, even by death?

Stories about Women

A consistent thread has run throughout Holy Week: Women have been mentioned favorably several different times, especially in contrast with men. We see this with the widow’s offering, in Mark 12:41-44, Jesus’ anointing in Mark 14:3-9, and then again Mark 15:40-41, when several women remain with Jesus until He dies. Women will also be the first ones to approach Jesus’ tomb in Mark 16:1-10.

	Women	Men
Mark 12:38-44	The widow offering two small copper coins	The scribes who like greetings in marketplaces, best seats in the synagogues, and the places of honor at feasts, and who devour widow’s houses
Mark 14:3-11	The woman who anoints Jesus with ointment. Jesus says: “Wherever the Gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.” Indeed, her story <i>is</i> told. We read it	People grumble against the woman for this, though the people’s genders are not mentioned Judas Iscariot leaves directly after this and conspires with the chief priests to betray Jesus
Mark 15:33-45	Women are prominently mentioned here, staying with Jesus until he died. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where Jesus’ body was placed	Several people (again we do not know their gender) stand by Jesus and wonder if He is calling Elijah instead of providing Jesus with sour wine, which is a painkiller Joseph of Arimathea is a member of the council, presumably the same council that condemned Jesus to death. He finally had the courage to ask for Jesus’

		body, and placed His body in a tomb.
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This is unusual, especially because women were not considered reliable witnesses in the Jewish community at the time. Yet, Mark includes all of these stories during his accounting of Holy Week. Many scholars have used this to point to the veracity of the Gospel accounts: if they were fictitious, the writers would not have included so many women as witnesses. Therefore, the inclusion of women here suggests that they were truly there, witnessing all of these events.

4. Why do you think Mark is including these stories about women? How should this affect our lives?

Holy Week–Saturday

Lesson 28: The Sabbath, Jesus Rests

The final Sabbath is referred to briefly in Mark's Gospel account. Joseph of Arimathea makes sure to entomb Jesus before the Sabbath, and Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome go to anoint Jesus' body after the Sabbath. The Sabbath day took place between those sentences. As Jesus rested on the Sabbath, let us rest from continuing forward with Mark's Gospel account. Instead, this lesson will look at two relevant Old Testament passages, and take full advantage of the headings that are placed in our Bibles.

While Jesus was on the cross, in excruciating pain and feeling his life slipping from Him, all He could do was quote Scripture, "*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani*". This is the third time Mark has recorded the Aramaic words Jesus spoke, and they mean "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?". This is the first verse of Psalm 22.

1. Read Psalm 22 and compare it to Mark 15:16-32. What connections do you see with Mark's account of the crucifixion? What observations or questions do you have? (Note that Mount Bashan *is* Mount Hermon, the center of spiritual evil where Jesus' transfiguration may have occurred.)

The Suffering Servant

This also connects back to the suffering servant poem of Isaiah 52:13-53:9. Jesus is the suffering servant, who suffered for all of our sins, and was exalted because of it. We can actually see that in the structure of the poem, since it is written as a chiasm. The A sections below may seem incongruous, until we realize that dying on a cross is exactly how Jesus was exalted.

<p>A: Isaiah 52:13 The wise servant who will be lifted up and exalted</p>	<p>This is kingly language. Something will happen to exalt the wise servant. But what?</p>
<p>B: Isaiah 52:14 The physical appearance of the servant and people's reaction</p>	<p>People were astonished by his appearance</p> <p>He will be marred beyond human semblance, beyond that of the children of mankind</p>
<p>C: Isaiah 52:15-53:1 What the Servant will do</p>	<p>Kings will shut their mouths because of him</p> <p>They will see what they did not already know</p> <p>The mighty arm of God will be revealed to them</p>
<p>B: Isaiah 53:2-3 The physical appearance of the servant and people's reaction</p>	<p>He grew up like a plant (a connection to the branch prophecy?)</p> <p>Had no form or majesty to look at him</p> <p>People thought he was despised, and he was rejected by men</p>
<p>A: Isaiah 53:4-9 <i>How</i> the wise servant will be lifted up and exalted</p>	<p>This is where it all gets interesting. In this part of the chiasm we would expect to see kingly language about how God's servant is wise.</p> <p>In fact, we do see that language, in an unexpected way. Jesus, the suffering servant, is exalted because:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He bore our griefs, carried our sorrows 2. Was pierced for our transgressions 3. His chastisement brought us peace 4. God laid on Him all of our iniquity <p>The cross is how Jesus was exalted. This is why the mocking coronation Jesus suffered was His actual coronation as King.</p>

2. Read Isaiah 52:13-53:9 and study the chart above. Compare it again to Mark 15:16-32. How is Jesus unexpectedly exalted in that section? How does it connect to this poem in Isaiah?

We have spent the previous 27 lessons going through Mark's Gospel account. As we did this we read and reread passages in Mark in order to better understand his messages about Jesus. Now is the time to go back through the entire Gospel account, and take advantage of the headings our Bible translators have placed throughout it.

3. Starting at Mark 1:1, go through the headings of Mark's entire Gospel account. Retell the stories to yourself that connect to the headings. If you are feeling ambitious, reread the entire text with everything we have learned in mind. What observations and questions do you have?

Holy Week– Easter Sunday! He IS risen!

Lesson 29: Mark 16:1-20

Mark's Gospel account does not end with Jesus' death. If it did end there, it would be a tragedy about an innocent man being executed. Instead, Mark's Gospel account ends, as all four Gospel accounts do, with Jesus' resurrection, his defeat of death. He is risen indeed!

Mark's ending can seem odd, and you probably see double brackets around Mark 16:9-20. That is because the oldest manuscripts of Mark do not contain those verses. Yet, those verses do seem important, because Mark's Gospel account would have a rather abrupt ending if it ceased at 16:8. So what is going on here?

There are a few possibilities that can answer this question.

1. Mark 16:9-20 could in fact be Mark's original ending, and the early manuscripts we have are just missing those verses
2. Mark may have written an original ending that was lost. This can happen when unrolling scrolls, particularly the beginning and the ending. Each time a scroll is opened, it places tension on the beginning and ending parts, and eventually they can fall off. This is seen in a number of the Dead Sea Scrolls found at Qumran.
3. This ending could have been added by a later scribe inspired by the Holy Spirit. **Nothing is theologically new in Mark 16:9-20** though some passages do require interpretation (Important Safety Tip: do not go playing with poisonous snakes!), and it all matches up with information in the other Gospel accounts and Acts
4. Mark actually intended his Gospel account to end at Mark 16:8, since if it does end at 16:8, there is a question implied: what are *you* going to do next?

1. One final time: Read Mark 16. What observations, thoughts, or questions do you have from the text? Write them down here.

Remember, Jesus *is* the “strongest man”, that none of the powers could contain when they converged on Him, and He does leave us with commands, particularly the Great Commission. We see the Great Commission in Mark 16:15-16. This is comparable to other passages found in Matthew and Acts.

2. Compare these three examples of the Great Commission presented here. How should this affect how we live our lives?

Mark 16:15-16	Matthew 28:18-20	Acts 1:7-8
<p>“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.’”</p>	<p>“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”</p>	<p>“[Jesus] said to them, ‘It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’”</p>

A Review of the Hinges

Finally, we have looked at several chiasms presented in Mark’s Gospel account. Let’s take a look at the hinges of all the chiasms as we approach our final question.

1. **Mark 1:24-25** Jesus has power over unclean spirits
2. **Mark 1:40-41** A leper comes up to Jesus, and says: “If you will, you can make me clean”. Jesus responds with “I will; be clean”
3. **Mark 2:27-28** The Sabbath is for man, not man for the Sabbath and the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (Remember, the Sabbath was to help Israel know God as the ultimate creator and liberator)

4. **Mark 2:23-3:6** Going with Jesus is good, and will lead to rest, liberation, and being with the Creator. Going against Jesus is bad, and leads to harm and death
5. **Mark 6:29-32** Jesus provides rest from our labor
6. **Mark 9:50** Jesus said, "Live at peace with one another"
7. **Isaiah 52:15-53:1** The suffering servant will reveal the mighty arm of God

3. Study the hinges of the chiasms that were pointed out throughout this study. What observations do you see through them?

4. What is next for you? How will you continue your walk with Jesus going forward? How do you plan to disciple others?