

ACTION: A Study of the Book of Mark

INTRODUCTION



Some of the best times growing up was when me and my buddies would all try to get money from our parents and go to the movies on Friday night. The movie theatre was about a 30 minute walk from my house (we walked everywhere) and so many Friday nights we spent at the movie theatres either watching movies or playing in the arcade. The best movies we enjoyed were the action movies! There's something about an action movie that keeps you on the edge of your seat that is captivating.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR FAVORITE ACTION MOVIES?

The Gospel of Mark (the second book in the New Testament) is one of the easiest books of the New Testament to read because it is so action packed. If you think about it, in the New Testament times they did not have copies of the Bible like you and I carry with us (or have on our iPods) and so they read aloud the copies that did exist. One New Testament scholar (fancy word meaning smart folks) said that the Gospel of Mark is essentially a drama.¹ If there was ever a book you could act out Mark would be that book.

But it is in that theme where the Gospel of Mark directs his readers into action. The gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were written not only to bear witness (to show something to be true) that Jesus was God's Son (see Mark 1:1) but that also those who read the gospels should seek and follow Jesus as his children.

That is a call to action.

That is a call to change our lives.

"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself take up his cross and follow me."

— Mark 8:34

¹ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002): 10-17.

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The study that you are about to embark on is designed with specific goals in mind for you and your faith formation. These lessons mean nothing if you do not take them home and change your life from them. Here are the goals that each lesson will seek to accomplish.

- ✓ To have a basic understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ as presented in the Book of Mark.
- ✓ To have a grasp at what the book of Mark is about.
- ✓ To show that Christ is the Son of God and the answer for the problems of our world.
- ✓ To highlight specific characteristics that are critical for our Christian journey.

THE MEAT BEHIND MARK



WHO WROTE THE BOOK?

There is a lot of discussion when it comes to New Testament books about what scholars (smart folks) call authorship. That is a fancy-shmancy term that simply means the author of the book.

J. K. Rowling wrote what series? _____ (Harry Potter)²

Stephanie Meyer wrote what popular series? _____ (Twilight)

Most people (there is always an exception) agree that the author of the Gospel of Mark is a guy by the name of John Mark. "John Mark" is mentioned three times in the New Testament (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37) and the name Mark is mentioned a few times (Acts 15:39; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24; 1 Pet. 5:13). From these references we can see that he was active in the early stages of the church and he and Peter seemed to be really close. Mark had a falling out with Paul (Acts 15:37) so as to split the missionary

² Anything you see in blue will not be in the student packet. This will help you when discussion is dry or in case you just do not know the answer to the question.

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tandem of Barnabas and Paul but later in the New Testament we see that apparently by the time Colossians was written Paul and Mark had reconciled (Col. 4:10).

WHEN WAS THE BOOK WRITTEN?

Most scholars agree that the Gospel of Mark was written sometime between AD 53-55. That means that the church had been around for roughly about twenty plus years before Mark wrote this gospel. By the time he wrote Mark James had written his epistle and Paul had already written Galatians, 1-2 Thessalonians and maybe even 1 Corinthians.

SO WHY DID HE WRITE THE GOSPEL TO BEGIN WITH?

When we ask questions like that one we are seeking to discover the purpose of the Gospel of Mark (sometimes it is also called the occasion). What prompted Mark to write what he wrote about in his gospel? Why did the founding fathers of the United States of America write the Declaration of Independence? The *purpose* of that document was to “declare” to King George III (ruler of Britain at the time) that Britain no longer had control over the colonies and that they now declare their freedom (i.e, independence).

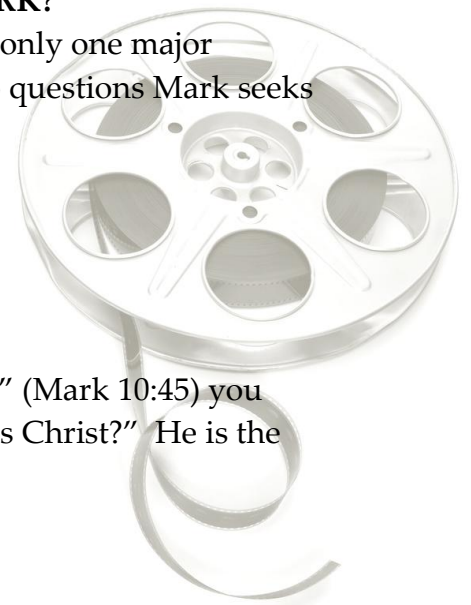
The purpose of the book of Mark is summarized in the opening verse of the book: **“The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God”** (Mark 1:1; NIV). The word “gospel” means glad tidings or good news and the specific content of that good news was a man by the name of Jesus Christ. Mark wrote this document to tell true events about Jesus Christ. True there are other gospels (Matthew, Luke and John) but this one was written from Mark’s perspective.

WHAT ARE SOME THEMES/TOPICS IN THE BOOK OF MARK?

Mark is concerned with a lot of themes but most notably there is only one major character Mark is concerned with in this book: Jesus Christ. Two questions Mark seeks to answer from this book are:

1. Who is Jesus Christ?
2. What does Jesus do?

So when you see a phrase like, “For even the Son of Man came...” (Mark 10:45) you know that this statement is addressing the question “Who is Jesus Christ?” He is the



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Son of Man! Other themes in Mark are: discipleship (what it means to be a follower of Jesus); forgiveness; redemption; submission; etc.

A BIT OF ADVICE...

A lot more could be said about this amazing gospel but I want to leave you with a plea that you read not only for information but for transformation. Scripture is not just about knowing things but it is about doing things. Mark shows us that we need to not only read and listen to what Jesus says, but follow him along that way.

PRAYER



GOD PLEASE BLESS US AS WE TRAVEL THROUGH THE GOSPEL OF MARK. WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOUR WORD IS THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY IN OUR LIVES AND SO GRACE US WITH WISDOM TO HANDLE WHAT IS IN MARK WITH ACCURACY AND HUMILITY. THANK YOU FOR THE PRICE YOUR SON PAID ON THE CROSS AND WE PRAISE AND MAGNIFY HIS NAME. ALLOW THIS STUDY TO PRICK THE INNER RECESSES OF OUR SOUL SO THAT WE MAY LIVE A CHANGED LIFE AND IN TURN, CHANGE THE LIVES OF OTHERS. IN THE NAME OF JESUS WE PRAY, AMEN!



Lesson 1: Jesus—the Source of Action

Mark 1: 4-7; 5:1-13

THE CREED AND CONNECTION



CREED

“Without Jesus we are powerless to find forgiveness and hope for there is no good news without the news of Jesus. In this lesson we will look at what it means to trust in the power of Jesus.”

CONNECTION

“WHO IS THE STRONGEST PERSON YOU KNOW OF?”

WHAT QUALITIES OR CHARACTERISTICS WOULD YOU SAY STRONG PEOPLE HAVE?

STRENGTH IS _____



THE CORE



BIBLE LESSON

Mark 1:4-7

HOW DOES JOHN THE BAPTIST DESCRIBE JESUS?

Mark 5:1-14

WHAT KIND OF MENTAL PICTURE DO YOU GET WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THIS DEMON-POSSESSED MAN?

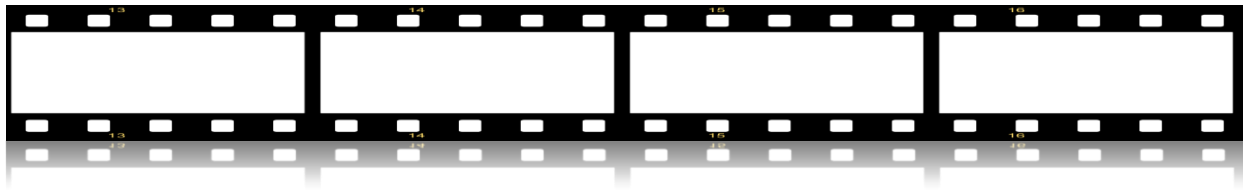
HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN A SITUATION WHERE YOU FELT LIKE NOBODY COULD HELP YOU? WHAT WAS IT LIKE? HOW DID YOU FEEL?

WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE DEMON TOWARDS JESUS?



WHY DO WE ASK PERMISSION FROM PEOPLE?

THE CHALLENGE



Ephesians 1:20-21...

ACCORDING TO THIS VERSE WHAT DOES JESUS HAVE POWER OVER?

The challenge...

Every week we are going to have a challenge for you to think about during the week. They are in the form of questions and it is your task to seek out the answers. Here are the questions...

- ✓ Do I believe that Jesus has control over everything?
- ✓ Do I let Jesus have control over everything?
- ✓ In what areas of my life do I need to let Jesus rule over?

Those are your challenges this week. Next week we will talk about a popular parable that presents four different types of people...but only one of them is acceptable.



Lesson 2: Christians—the Soil of Action

Mark 4:1-20

The Creed and Connection



CREED

“Jesus commands his followers that they pay attention to the level of their commitment not only in how they receive the word but also how they spread the word to everybody else.”

CONNECTION

“WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR FARMERS TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE SOIL
WHEN THEY PLANT SEEDS?”

“WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR SPIRITUALITY WHAT ARE SOME REASONS WE
DO NOT GROW?”



The Core



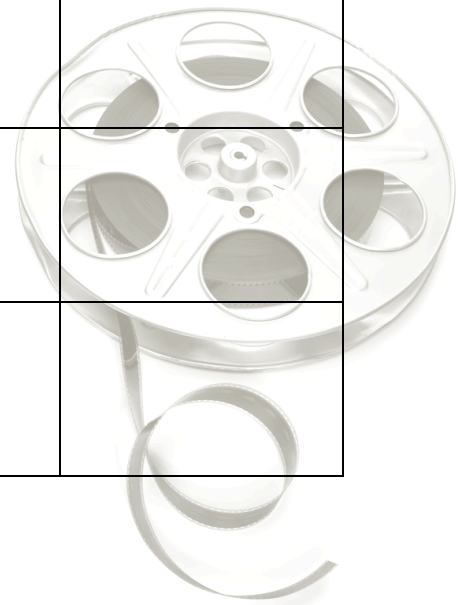
BIBLE LESSON

MARK 4:1-9

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THIS PARABLE?

WHAT IS A PARABLE?

Seed	Result	Meaning	Is this me?
ALONG THE PATH			
ROCKY GROUND			
THORNS			
GOOD SOIL			



READ MARK 4:10-13

READ MARK 4:14-20

**IF YOU WERE TO DESCRIBE EACH SEED WITH ONE WORD WHAT WOULD
THAT ONE WORD BE?**

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF EACH SEED?

GO BACK TO YOUR CHART ON PAGE 2

WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS WAS LOOKING FOR “GOOD SOIL” FOLLOWERS?

DO YOU THINK THERE ARE BAD SOIL CHRISTIANS IN THE CHURCH?



The Challenge



2 Peter 3:18...

ACCORDING TO THIS VERSE WHAT DO WE GROW IN?

The challenge...

Every week we are going to have a challenge for you to think about during the week. This week we have a chart for you to fill out. It is the same chart we have filled out the entire time except one column remains. That is for you to fill out and home. Look at your life and ask the question: Does this apply to me?



Lesson 3: Hypocrisy—the Saboteur of Action

Mark 7:1-20

The Creed and Connection



CREED

“In order to committ to being a Christian we must live a life that is genuine and free from hypocrisy which means we have to look deep in our hearts to unleash the bad in order to replace it with the good.”

CONNECTION

“WHEN IT COMES TO SHOES HOW DO YOU KNOW IF THEY ARE REAL BRANDS OF SHOES (LIKE NIKE) OR FAKE?

“WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR FRIENDS AT CHURCH OR AT SCHOOL, HOW DO YOU KNOW THEY ARE REAL OR FAKE?”

“WHEN IT COMES TO CHRISTIANS, HOW DO YOU KNOW THEY ARE REAL OR FAKE?



The Core



BIBLE LESSON

Mark 7:1-4

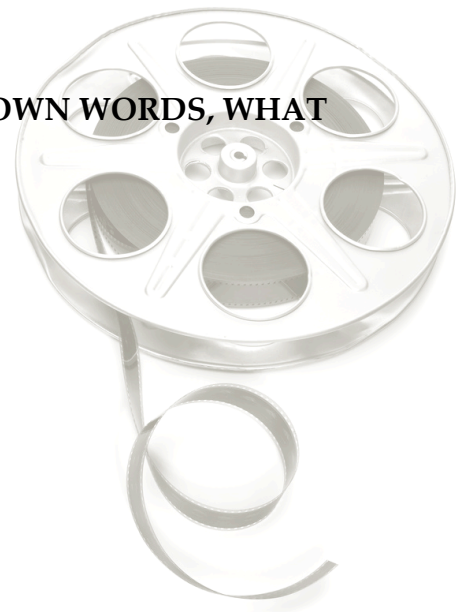
WHO ARE THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES?

WHY DO YOU THINK THEY HAD SO MANY DIFFERENT TRADITIONS?

Mark 7:5-13

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE JESUS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE PHARISEES AT THIS POINT?

JESUS CALLS THE PHARISEES "HYPOCRITES". IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT IS A HYPOCRITE?



Mark 7:14-23

WHAT DOES JESUS MEAN WHEN HE TALKS ABOUT THOSE THINGS ON THE “OUTSIDE” THAT DEFILE A MAN?

WHY DO YOU THINK JESUS SAID IT WAS HEART-ISSUES (THINGS ON THE INSIDE) THAT MAKES A PERSON DIRTY?

The Challenge



- Can a person who goes to church services be evil?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Can a person who attends every youth group function still be evil?
☐ Yes ☐ No
- Can a person who is a minister still be evil?
☐ Yes ☐ No

THEN HOW CAN WE TELL IF SOMEONE IS GENUINE OR FAKE?



In what ways have I lived like the people of the world or like a hypocrite?

In what ways have I lived like Jesus?

Comparing the two what steps do you need to take to change?



Lesson 4: Discipleship—the Sustenance of Action

Mark 8:31-38

The Creed and Connection



CREED

“Christians must rid themselves of what they want and pay attention more to what God wants them to do.”

CONNECTION

WHAT MAKES A PERSON A GOOD CHRISTIAN?

HAVE YOU EVER HAD TO DO A GROUP PROJECT OR BEEN ON A SPORTS TEAM AND ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WAS LAZY AND DIDN'T PULL HIS OR HER WEIGHT?

WHAT WAS THAT EXPERIENCE LIKE?



The Core



BIBLE LESSON

Mark 8:31-33

**HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND IF SOMEONE YOU ADMIRERD TOLD YOU HE
WAS GOING TO SUFFER AND BE KILLED?**

WHY WAS JESUS SO HARSH TO PETER?

Mark 8:34

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO DENY OURSELVES?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "TAKE UP THE CROSS" AND FOLLOW JESUS?



Mark 8:35-38

WHAT DOES JESUS MEAN BY SAVING LIVES AND LOSING LIVES?


WHAT APPLICATION DOES VERSES 36-37 HAVE ON OUR LIVES?

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ASHAMED OF JESUS AND WHAT DOES THAT
MEAN FOR US?**

The Challenge



Day	I served Jesus by....	I struggled with...
Monday	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Praying before I went to school and read a couple of verses from John.• helping someone with their homework.• helping mom clean the kitchen.• giving \$0.50 to a guy at school who didn't have lunch money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• understanding what I read in the bible.• treating my brother or sister nicely.• talking back to dad when he asked me to clean my room.

Day	I served Jesus by...	I struggled with...
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		



Lesson 5: Love—the Strategy of Action

Mark 12:28-34

The Creed and Connection



CREED

“The basic, fundamental gesture Christians are to have in following God is complete devotion to him and complete devotion to others.”

CONNECTION

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE ILLUSTRATION?



The Core



BIBLE LESSON

Mark 12:28

**WHY DO YOU THINK THE SCRIBE WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE MOST
IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT?**

Mark 12:29-30

WHAT IS LOVE?

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE HEBREW TERM SHEMA?

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOVE GOD WITH ALL OF OUR HEART, SOUL,
MIND AND STRENGTH?**



WHY IS IT SO HARD TO LOVE GOD WITH OUR ENTIRE EXISTENCE?

Mark 12:31

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS AS OURSELVES?

**WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW WE MUST LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR IN
OUR DAY AND TIME?**

Mark 12:32-34



The Challenge



Today we are going to close differently. Today we are going to spend some time in prayer. I want you to break up into groups of 2-3 and pray for each other. Pray that each other understand the love of God more and pray that each other would love others as much as they love themselves. Pray for understanding and pray for guidance.



Lesson 6: Death—the Sentence of Action

Mark 14:53-65; 15:1-39

The Creed and Connection



CREED

“A Christian’s lifelong service in the kingdom will lead to one result and one result alone: death.”

CONNECTION

WHY ARE WE SO AFRAID OF DYING?

The Core



BIBLE LESSON

Mark 14:53-64

DO YOU THINK THE TRIAL JESUS HAD WITH THE COUNCIL WAS FAIR?
WHY OR WHY NOT?

**WHAT DID JESUS DO THAT CAUSED HIM TO BE BETRAYED BY JESUS AND
TRIED BY THE JEWS?**

Mark 15:1-15

WHY DID JESUS GO TO PILATE?

HOW DO YOU THINK PILATE FELT ABOUT JESUS?

Mark 15:16-20

WHAT SORT OF IMAGE DO YOU GET AT WHAT IS TAKING PLACE?



AGAIN, WHY IS THIS HAPPENING TO JESUS?

Mark 15:21-39

**EVEN WHEN JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED, WHAT ATTITUDE DID HE POSSESS
TOWARDS ALL PEOPLE?**

SO WHAT????

LESSON #1 –

LESSON #2 –

LESSON #3 –



The Challenge



UPON HEARING AND STUDYING ABOUT THE DEATH OF JESUS, I NEED TO _____!

Take a few moments and fill out what you need to do with your spiritual life based on the death of Jesus. Fill it out and share with the class.



Lesson 7: Rebirth—the Sustainment of Action

Mark 15:42-47; 16:1-8

The Creed and Connection



CREED

“Our final chapter in life will be the beginning of our experience with a resurrected body and with this body we spend eternity with Christ in heaven.”

CONNECTION

WHAT DO YOU THINK IT WOULD BE LIKE TO NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THINGS LIKE PAIN, MONEY, HOMEWORK OR EVEN DYING?

WHY DO YOU GO TO CHURCH SERVICES?



The Core



BIBLE LESSON

Mark 15:42-47

**WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF SEEKING A PLACE FOR JESUS TO BE BURIED
SO QUICKLY?**

Mark 16:1-8

**WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE IF YOU SAW SOMEONE RISE FROM THE
DEAD?**

**ALONG THE SAME LINES, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE REACTION OF THOSE
WHO SAW HIM WAS?**

**WHY DO YOU THINK PETER'S NAME IS THE ONLY DISCIPLE MENTIONED
WHEN THE ANGEL TOLD MARY AND MARY MAGDALENE TO TELL THE
DISCIPLES (16:7)?**



WHAT IS THE POINT OF ANY RESURRECTION?

WHAT DOES THE RESURRECTION MEAN FOR YOU?

Three things...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

But here is the more difficult question....

HOW DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESURRECTION?



The Challenge



**WHAT STEPS DO I NEED TO TAKE TO BE A PERSON OF ACTION IN THE
KINGDOM OF GOD?**

