

The Gospel of Mark

Bible Study Guide

9 Bible Studies on Mark chapters 1-12

(And a 13 week preaching program)

A close look at the life of Jesus

“But what about you?” He asked. “Who do you say I am?”

Mark chapter 8 verse 29



Sermon Series Outline

Sunday	Title	Passage 1	Passage 2	Preacher
6 Feb	Forgiveness Is Yours	Mark 1:29-34	Mark 2:1-12	Rev. Bruce Stanley
13 Feb	In the family	Mark 3:13-19	Mark 3:20-35	Emily Carpenter
20 Feb	Listening ears	Mark 4:1-9	Mark 4:10-20	Rev. Derek Brown Ben Carpentier
27 Feb	Just believe	Mark 5:21-34	Mark 5:35-43	Rev. Bruce Stanley
6 Mar	A picture of obedience	Mark 6:1-6a	Mark 6:6b-12	Rev. Bruce Stanley
13 Mar	"Soul food"	Mark 6:30-44	Mark 6:45-56	Mark Carpenter
20 Mar	Who do you say I am?	Mark 8:22-26	Mark 8:27-30	Rev. Bruce Stanley
27 Mar	Who then can be saved	Mark 10:13-16	Mark 10:17-31	Ian Rose Penny Carpentier
3 April	Love God, love each other	Mark 12:13-17	Mark 12:28-34	Rev. Bruce Stanley
10 April	Be on your guard	Mark 13:1-24	Mark 13:25-37	Rev. Bruce Stanley
17 April	Gethsemane	Mark 14:32-42	Mark 14:43-52	Emily Carpenter
22 April	The Son of God	Mark 15:21-32	Mark 15:33-41	Rev. Bruce Stanley
24 April	He has risen	Mark 15:42-47	Mark 16:1-8	Rev. Bruce Stanley

References and Resources:

"The message of Mark" by Donald English from the "Bible Speaks Today" Bible Commentary series. Cost: about \$20
 "The Gospel of Mark" by William L. Lane from the NICOT Bible Commentary Series. Cost: about \$60.

Bible Study Approach

Preparation before the bible study meeting:

1. Pray for Spiritual insight. Pray God will give you understanding of his word and prepare you to be taught.
2. Read the main passage. (Try reading different translations – NIV, NESB, etc)
3. Meditate on the passage – think about it.
4. Prepare your answers and thoughts to the questions in the study guide, which you will go through in the meeting
5. **During the meeting, you may not have time to go through ALL of the questions – your leader will select questions each week that will be most helpful for your group. So it is important you prepare all of the study yourself to get the most out of it.**

Meditating on the passage – getting the most out of it:

1. Ask the questions: WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, HOW
2. What things are being emphasized?
3. What things are being repeated?
4. Are there things that are connected – within the passage or with other passages in the Bible?
5. Interpretation: What does it mean?
 - a. Context – style (poetry, history, etc), culture, geography, etc
 - b. Meaning – of important words and phrases
6. Think about applying each passage to your own life:
 - a. Personal, Family, Church, Work, Social
7. Is there an example to follow? A sin to avoid? A promise to hold on to? A prayer to pray? Commands to obey? Verses to memorise? Doctrinal understanding that needs correcting? Challenges to face?
8. Finally, ask yourself – “Who can I share this with?”

Special note for the gospel of Mark:

A gospel is a biography of the life of Jesus. Mark’s Gospel is the shortest of the 4 gospels. (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

It is difficult to understand the flow of the book of Mark if we only read a chapter or two at a time. For this reason, it is a great idea to sit down and read the whole of the book of Mark in one sitting (or two sittings if you need a break in the middle!)

This will help us to understand Mark as a complete book as it was originally written, not just as a series of verses and chapters. In doing this, we can begin to appreciate the literature as a complete story, and this will help us appreciate the flow of the whole story. You might even find it helpful to read it in different versions (translations). For a free online resource to view the different translations in English and other languages, visit:

<http://www.biblegateway.com>

Enjoy this great book!

Study One – Forgiveness is yours

Mark 1:29-34

²⁹ As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰ Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. ³¹ So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. ³² That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³ The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴ and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Mark 2:1-12

¹ A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² So many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰ But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..." He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Investigating the Bible

1. Briefly discuss these 2 examples of forgiveness in the Old Testament. **What is forgiveness? Who forgives?**
 - a. 2 Chronicles 7:11-16

b. Jeremiah 31:33-34

2. Briefly discuss these 2 examples of evil spirits and healing in the Bible.
What happens in each account? Why?

- a. Mark 5:1-2, 12-13

- b. Genesis 20:17-18

3. READ Mark 1:29-34

- a. What does this passage tell us about who Jesus was?

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- b. What does this passage tell us about the evil spirits and Satan's place in this world?

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- c. Notice the people that are mentioned in this short passage. What point do you think Mark is trying to make by mentioning these people?

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- d. Something to consider... Take a note of the way women are mentioned throughout Mark's gospel.

4. READ Mark 2:1-12

- a. What does this passage tell us about who Jesus was?

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- b. Why does Jesus make a point out of saying "your sins are forgiven"?

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- c. Do you notice the opposition growing against Jesus in this passage? Why is there opposition to him?

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5. Look back at chapters 1 and 2 and the stories about Jesus and what he did. Of all of the things that happened, why do you think Mark has chosen to tell us these specific events?

Investigating our lives

6. If you were in an elevator with someone for just 30 seconds, and they asked you "Who was Jesus?" how would you respond? (Let's imagine they've never really heard anything about him or Christianity!)

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7. If you were writing a book about Jesus, how would you begin?

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8. If you were there in Jesus' day, 2000 years ago, which of the events would you have liked to see from chapters 1 and 2? Why?

Study Two – In the family

Mark 3:13-19

¹³ Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴ He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons. ¹⁶ These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷ James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸ Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Mark 3:20-35

²⁰ Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹ When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

²² And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.” ²³ So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴ If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵ If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶ And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. ²⁷ In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. ²⁸ I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. ²⁹ But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin.” ³⁰ He said this because they were saying, “He has an evil spirit.” Jesus’ Mother and Brothers ³¹ Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³² A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.” ³³ “Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked. ³⁴ Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵ Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Investigating the Bible

1. Have a look at the way God “calls” people in the Bible. **How do they respond?**

a. Exodus 3:1-1 _____

b. 1 Samuel 3:1-10 _____

2. **READ Mark 3:13-19**

How do people respond to Jesus’ call?

The word “apostle” means “sent one”. Why does Jesus call them apostles?

3. **READ Mark 3:20-30.** What do most people seem to think about Jesus at this stage of his ministry?

4. How does Jesus explain that he cannot be casting out demons by Beelzebub (Satan)?

5. Comment on verse 29: Jesus' casting out demons was a sign of the kingdom of God coming on earth. Yet the teachers of the law attributed this work to Satan himself. They "blasphemed against the Holy Spirit". This is unforgivable because it is a refusal to recognise God's work and is a resistance to the work of the Spirit. How can we seek forgiveness if we refuse the work of the Spirit of God?

6. **READ Luke 2:41-50.** What do we learn about Jesus' relationship to God in this account? What do we learn about his relationship with his family?

7. **READ Mark 3:31-35.** What do we learn about Jesus relationship to God in this account? What do we learn about his relationship with his family?

Investigating our lives

8. Do you consider yourself as someone God has called to do his work?

9. When God calls you to do his work, how do you respond? Can you think of an example?

10. Who do you consider to be your "family"?

Study 3- Listening ears

Mark 4:1-9

¹ Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ² He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³ "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴ As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵ Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶ But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷ Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸ Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times." ⁹ Then Jesus said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

Mark 4:10-20

¹⁰ When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹ He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹² so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" ¹³ Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴ The farmer sows the word. ¹⁵ Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ¹⁶ Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ¹⁸ Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹ but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²⁰ Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown."

Investigating the Bible

1. Parables are teaching tools that make a point. Usually one distinct point. What is your favourite parable in the Bible? What is the teaching point of that parable?

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2. **READ Deuteronomy 4:5-8.** Why does Moses teach Israel the laws of God? What does it mean to them as a nation?

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3. **Read Mark 4:1-9.** What does Jesus mean when he says: "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."?

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4. The parable Jesus tells is not understood by everyone. In verse 12, Jesus quotes Isaiah 6:9. Look up this passage and read Isaiah 6:8-13.

You will see from these verses that the lack of understanding from some people is only for a certain time. Isaiah 7 is then the prophecy of Immanuel – God’s arrival on earth when the time is right. Jesus speaks in parables because the time is not quite right for all to hear the message. READ also Isaiah 7:14-17. What Mark is trying to explain to us is that the kingdom of God is revealed to those he chooses, at the time he chooses. What are your thoughts on this?

5. **READ Mark 4:10-20.** How does Jesus explain this parable to the disciples? What does it mean? What does each part of the parable represent?
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6. You’ll notice that the seed is always the same. Only the soil is different. Can you think of examples of the different soils in this world? The path where the Word is snatched away, the rocky soil with no root, the thorny soil choked by weeds?
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Investigating our lives

7. Are you sometimes in danger of being anything **but** the good soil? Which soil type is a concern for you in your life?
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8. Do you think of yourself as someone whose life is bearing a crop of 30, 60 or 100 times? Do you consider the impact your faith is having on others around you?
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9. If you are the good soil, and you have heard the word, and accepted it, how are you going about producing a crop (being fruitful)?
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Study Four – Just believe

Mark 5:21-34

²¹ When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²² Then one of the synagogue rulers, named Jairus, came there. Seeing Jesus, he fell at his feet ²³ and pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴ So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵ And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹ “You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’ ” ³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Mark 5:35-43

³⁵ While Jesus was still speaking, some men came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher any more?” ³⁶ Ignoring what they said, Jesus told the synagogue ruler, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” ³⁷ He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸ When they came to the home of the synagogue ruler, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹ He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰ But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “*Talitha koum!*” (which means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). ⁴² Immediately the girl stood up and walked around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³ He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Investigating the text

1. **READ Mark 5:21-34.** Consider the woman with bleeding. What challenges would she have been facing in her life before she met Jesus?
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2. How would she have felt when Jesus started looking for her?
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3. What were his disciples thinking?
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4. Put yourself in the woman's situation. If you were subject to bleeding in that society, you would have been considered unclean and unable to be around people. Would you have had the faith to go into a crowd and try to touch the man that everyone was trying to get close to? Would you have thought "If only I could touch his cloak?" Why or why not?
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5. While we are distracted in some ways by the story of this woman, there is another story happening. The daughter of the leader Jairus is dying. And now, because of the delay, she is believed to have died.

READ Mark 5:35-43. How would you feel if you were Jairus?

6. Why would Jesus not want people to know about this healing? Wouldn't they find out eventually anyway?
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7. Notice again in these stories the prominent position women play in the gospel of Mark. Why do you think he did this more than most writers of the day? At the time of writing, many people did not include women in historical events. Why do you think that was?
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8. As you read these accounts, notice how Mark moves us along, following Jesus along the road, almost as if we were there. Why do you think he keeps talking about the geography of the region? ("They went across the lake, they went by boat, from village to village...")
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Investigating our lives

9. Notice how this story includes a very important man and an unimportant woman. What does this tell us about Jesus and his ministry?
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10. When you face a crisis in your life, like Jairus and the woman, do you "run to Jesus" like Jairus, or "reach out for him" like the woman, or are there times you try and just handle the problem yourself?
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Study Five – A picture of obedience

Mark 6:1-6

¹ Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! ³ Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. ⁴ Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.” ⁵ He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶ And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.

Mark 6:7-12

⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. ⁸ These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.” ¹² They went out and preached that people should repent.

Investigating the Bible

1. What picture has Mark given us so far of the ministry of Jesus and of the people that he is around? Look back over some of the passages from chapters 1-5. Which ones stay in your mind and why?

2. **READ Mark 6:1-6.** What does this teach us about Jesus and his ministry on earth? What do you find interesting about the things his hometown says about him and his teaching?

3. **READ Mark 1:4-8.** What image do you have of John and his ministry before Jesus arrives on the scene? What was he doing? What was his mission?

4. **READ Mark 6:7-12.** In this passage, we have now moved from John preparing for Jesus’ arrival, to Jesus sending out others in his name. Why is this significant?

5. There is significant risk in Jesus sending out his disciples now. They do not understand his teaching (4:10), they don't completely trust him (4:38), and they are yet to understand who Jesus really is and what he came to do (8:32). Many people hated Jesus and his followers. Yet he sends them out. What did he send them out with? Was this enough?
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6. In contrast to question 5, we also see what the disciples were NOT to take with them. Why are the disciples not to take these things with them?
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7. What was the message they preached? What does it mean to preach this?
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Investigating our lives

8. **READ 2 Corinthians 5:16-20.** If we are ambassadors for Christ, with what does God send out into the world? What is our message? What are we to take with us?
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9. Have you ever made excuses for not going out as an ambassador for Christ with the message of reconciliation? Perhaps that you are not well enough prepared? Or that you need more training or more resources? Are there any good excuses NOT to go out with God's message to the world?
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10. How willing are you to leave things behind in order to follow God's call on your life?
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11. If you have time, read and compare the account in **Luke 10:1-17**, where Jesus sends out seventy-two others.

Study Six – Soul food

Mark 6:30-44

³⁰ The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹ Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” ³² So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴ When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. ³⁵ By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. ³⁶ Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.” ³⁷ But he answered, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “That would take eight months of a man’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?” ³⁸ “How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.” When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.” ³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰ So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹ Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to set before the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴² They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³ and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴ The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

Mark 6:45-56

⁴⁵ Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶ After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray. ⁴⁷ When evening came, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land. ⁴⁸ He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. About the fourth watch of the night he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹ but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰ because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” ⁵¹ Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, ⁵² for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened. ⁵³ When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴ As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. ⁵⁵ They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶ And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched him were healed.

Investigating the Bible

1. **READ Exodus 16:11-18.** What do we learn here about the way the Lord provides for his people?

2. **READ Mark6:30-44.** How does this account compare to the account of Exodus 16? What are the similarities? What are the differences?

3. Why does Mark tell us this story about the feeding of the 5000? What does it teach the disciples about Jesus? What does it teach **us** about Jesus? What does it teach us about the disciples and the crowd?

4. **READ Exodus 14:21-22.** The Red Sea was parted so the Israelites could escape from Egypt. It was a display of power only capable from God himself. And now, in Mark 6, we see Jesus walking on water. Again, Jesus is displaying power that only God alone has. Power to feed 5000, power to walk on water! Why are the disciples afraid?

5. What does verse 51-52 mean? "They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened."

In many ways, we see Jesus take on the role Moses held in the past. But instead of God performing the miracles through Moses holding out a staff, Jesus performs them himself, showing he IS God and has the power of God.

Investigating our lives

6. The disciples were afraid and did not understand Jesus. When are you most afraid in life? Are there times that you are afraid because you do not fully understand what God is doing?

7. Are you surprised by the miraculous? Why or why not?

8. How do we overcome doubt and fear in our Christian life?

Study Seven – Who do you say I am?

Mark 8:22-26

²² They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³ He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." ²⁵ Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't go into the village."

Mark 8:27-30

Peter's Confession of Christ

²⁷ Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" ²⁸ They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Investigating the Bible

1. Consider these other accounts of the healing of blind people in the Bible. What happens in each account?

a. Matthew 9:27-31

b. Matthew 20:29-34

2. **READ Mark 8:22-26.** What differences do you notice in this blind man healing compared to the ones in Matthew?

3. Why does Jesus take him outside the village and tell him afterwards not to go back into the village?

4. Why do you think a “double healing: was needed for this man? **Hint:** Think about how Jesus is “revealing” himself to the people around him throughout the gospel of Mark.

5. **READ Mark 8:27-30.** This passage is well known as a turning point in the gospel of Mark because it is the first confession by someone (Peter) of the true identity of Jesus. Do you think Peter actually understood completely what it meant for Jesus to be “the Christ”?

6. The “Christ” or “Messiah” was God’s promised savior to deliver his people and set them free. Do you think Peter’s idea of “the Christ” was different to God’s idea? **READ Mark 8:31-33** to see what happens next!

7. Why did people think Jesus was John the Baptist (**READ Matthew 3:1-3**), Elijah (**READ Malachi 4:5**) or a prophet?

Investigating our lives

8. Who is Jesus? Who do YOU say he is? If someone asked you that question today, how would you reply?

9. Like Peter, sometimes we might have different expectations of how God should work among us. When you face difficult times, what are your expectations of God in those times?

10. Many people are blind to who Jesus is. Some are partially blind and see a blurry picture of him. And others see him clearly.” Discuss this statement, thinking of people – friends / family / relatives – in your life.

Study Eight – Who then can be saved?

Mark 10:13-16

¹³ People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴ When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵ I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶ And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

Mark 10:17-31

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” ¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.’” ²⁰ “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” ²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” ²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. ²³ Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” ²⁴ The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵ It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁶ The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” ²⁷ Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.” ²⁸ Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!” ²⁹ “I tell you the truth,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Investigating the Bible

1. Have a look at these passages about children. What is Jesus’ attitude towards children? Why?

a. Matthew 11:25-26 _____

b. Matthew 18:1-4 _____

2. **READ 10:13-16.** Why do you think the disciples stopped the children coming to Jesus?

3. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God like a child?

4. **READ Mark 10:17-31.**

a. What is Jesus' claim in verse 18?

b. Verse 20 – do you think the man had really kept all the commandments?

c. Why did Jesus ask him to give everything away?

5. **READ Psalm 52.** What does this Psalm say about those who trust in their wealth over God? How does it compare with what Jesus says?

6. Discuss the consequences of verse 27 in the way we think about our faith and how we respond to this call from Jesus to follow him.

Investigating our lives

7. How do you treat the children in your life? Do you consider yourself more important? What importance do you place on the teaching of our children at church? How are you involved, or how do you support this ministry work? Why not consider attending a children's ministry group at church just to see how the children are taught.

8. Could you do it? If it was necessary in order for you to follow Jesus, could you give up everything?

9. What things in your life can be an obstacle for your faith? How can you remove those obstacles?

Study Nine – Love God, Love each other

Mark 12:13-17

¹³ Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. ¹⁴ They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not? ¹⁵ Should we pay or shouldn’t we?” But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” ¹⁶ They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?” “Caesar’s,” they replied. ¹⁷ Then Jesus said to them, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” And they were amazed at him.

Mark 12:28-34

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?” ²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.” ³² “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Investigating the Bible

1. Without coming into major arguments with those in your group...! Discuss: Are you supportive of your government?
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2. **READ Mark 12:13-17.** Jesus is caught in a difficult political situation, surrounded by many different groups of people. The Pharisees were strict in observing God’s laws and opposed the Roman rule (but were not revolutionaries). The Herodians depended upon Rome and so supported their rule. And the Zealots believed that taxes should not be paid.

How do you think Jesus’ answer would have appealed to these different groups? Why were they amazed?

3. What does Jesus mean when he says: “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”?
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4. What things on this earth bear the image of men? What things on this earth bear the image of God? **READ Genesis 1:27**
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5. **READ Mark 12: 28-34.** Compare this with the commandments in **Exodus 20:1-17**. Do all of the commandments fall under these 2 that Jesus has given?
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6. This passage follows several encounters of Jesus with challenges from different groups. Consider the flow of this section:

- 11:27-33, Jesus' authority is questioned
- 12:1-12, Jesus tells a parable about those who reject the Son of God
- 12:13-17 – Jesus challenged about paying taxes to the government
- 12:18-27 – Jesus challenged about the law and the afterlife concerning marriage

Do you think 12:28-34 brings a nice conclusion to this section? (I do!)

7. Reading on further, **2:35-40** then puts forward, again, Jesus true identity and authority after it has been questioned by those around him in positions of human authority, followed by an example of a widow, with no authority or power, being the example they are all to follow. **READ Mark 12:41-44** and compare this story with the previous chapter's incidents.
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Investigating our lives

8. Do you give to God what is God's? What do you give?
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9. Do you consider Jesus' two most important commandments as something we should try to follow and live by? If so, in what ways do you do this?
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10. As you reflect on the book of Mark, how are "important people" and "unimportant people" considered by Jesus? Consider especially children, widows and women(who in those days were "less important" than men)
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