

MARK 1:1-3:6 – WHO IS THIS GUY??

Study #2

Make sure you do the first overview study of this section before you step into this one.

Mark is not only a fast-moving gospel; it also touches on, in a very natural way, some of the most significant issues of our faith: baptism, temptation, calling, evil, healing, miracles, quiet times & prayer... all in the first chapter! ☺

So what I prefer to do is go slowly through the first few chapters of Mark, and help students learn some crucial things about reading the Bible – these are stolen straight from InterVarsity:

1. **Observation**
2. **Investigation**
3. **Application**

Observation: help students to start learning how to ask themselves these questions as they read:

- What STANDS OUT to you?
- Do I know the real MEANINGS of all the key words in the text?
- WHO are the people named in this passage? WHAT do I learn about them from this passage?
- What other passages from scripture are QUOTED?
- What is COOL or CONFUSING in this passage?

Investigation: they also need to learn how to use some key aides in studying the Bible. Introduce them to:

- **a Bible dictionary** – you can find these online at www.studylight.org/dic/hbd/ or BUY ONE from www.christianbook.com or www.ivpress.com.
- **a Bible atlas** – look at the same sources for these. It's really helpful for students to understand that these things occurred in real places. Keep track of where Jesus goes during the gospel.
- **a Bible commentary** – you can use study notes from your Bible, or decide to invest in a commentary for this specific book. My favorites are from the *Bible Speaks Today* series from InterVarsity Press.
- **FOR YOUR OWN PREPARATION:** www.biblegateway.com has a WEALTH of resources for you.

Application: this is obvious, but will take some creativity on your part. We want our beliefs to move from the spiritual, philosophical, and theoretical to the PRACTICAL. Help students to not just make simple, vague goals. Help them to translate the Bible into their daily lives by living out the meaning of the words

they learn, the actions they see in the life of Christ, and counting on the promises we receive in Christ.

So where do we begin? Invite students to review what they learned from the overview study from last week.

Then just read a short section: **Mark 1:1-8**. Use the attached worksheet – make a copy for each student. Have them take notes – perhaps keep a folder for small group?

Then I'd recommend exploring – this may take you a few weeks:

- The Old Testament passages mentioned in verses 2 & 3. They come from **Malachi 3:1** and **Isaiah 40:3**. Why would Mark have us immediately connect Jesus with the fulfillment of Old Testament passages?
- Who is this John the Baptist character? Have them read **Luke 1:5-17** to get some background on him. Then perhaps (if it's not too confusing) have them look up **2 Kings 1:8**. What they'll see is that Elijah also dressed like John the Baptist. Elijah was a prophet who called the Israelites to repentance, and pointed them to hope in God.
- In terms of application, have them talk about **baptism**. Have they been baptized? If so, have them describe when they did it. If not, challenge them to get baptized. Set that up for them if needed.

In the same way, you can spend the next several weeks looking at remarkable stuff: **Always start with the Observation, Investigation, Application worksheet. Get students to work on their own first. Don't just give them the "answers."**

Mark 1:9-12

- Have them find Nazareth on a map.
- Have them picture the scene. Do you think others heard the voice that came from heaven, or only Jesus?
- Have them read Luke 4 for another, longer account of the temptation in the desert. Talk about the purpose of stepping away from the busyness of life for times in the "desert." Talk about temptation, and observe how Jesus dealt with it.

Mark 1:14-20

- Have them notice what the "good news" actually is. Why don't they hear people say this today? How could the world be changed?
- What does it mean to "believe"? What does it mean to "repent"? Get practical.
- Discuss why the disciples seemed to follow Jesus so easily. Do they follow Jesus so easily?

- Are the students “fishers of men”? Why or why not? What holds them back? What motivates them?

Mark 1:21-28

- Have them find Capernaum.
- Make sure they know what key words mean: Sabbath, synagogue, the law
- Discuss: why do evil spirits seem to know who Jesus is, and no one else does?
- Discuss: what would be good about news spreading quickly about Jesus? What would be difficult about it?
- Talk about evil. (*Be prepared – students love talking about crazy stuff like this!*) Does evil feel real to them?

Mark 1:29-34

- Lots of characters here. Have them keep track of them.
- Again, the demons seem to know who Jesus is? What’s that about? *Mark wants to build a plot tension in the gospel. He wants to give us the “inside scoop” about the big news of the gospel – that Jesus is the Son of God. But as the story is unfolding, Jesus does not want this news to come out early in his ministry, because people will put many expectations on Him. Instead, He wants the truth about Himself to slowly make itself obvious. This is known as “the messianic secret.” Look for how many times it appears in the Book of Mark.*
- He seems to keep healing people and performing miracles. Why? Is he just showing off His power? *You want the students to slowly understand that miracles are like “mini-parables” – just as Jesus has power over the evil spirit, he can help you overcome the power of evil in your life; just as your own life is “sick” with sin, He can heal you of your “illness.” Furthermore, the miracles validate His authority to tell people they need to repent and follow Him. Miracles were never done to impress people or gain attention.*

Mark 1:35-39

- Why did Jesus get up early to pray? Obvious application here – what are their own devotional lives like? **HELP THEM WORK ON THIS** – this is a difficult spiritual discipline to establish.
- Why do you think Jesus left Capernaum?

Mark 1:40-45

- Make sure they know what leprosy is. Help them see the social implications of this disease.
- Have them notice what Jesus did in this healing: He showed compassion, He touched someone who probably hadn’t been touched in years, He showed Him the love of God by being willing to heal.
- The messianic secret shows up again. Jesus clearly doesn’t want to be famous or draw a bunch of sensational attention to Himself.

Mark 2:1-12

- I love having students try to picture the details of this scene. Have some fun with it. Have them picture someone coming through the ceiling! Make sure they know what a paralytic is.
- Discuss: am I as desperate as they 4 friends to bring my friends to Jesus? Why or why not?
- Why were the teachers of the law so angry?
- Notice how Jesus responds when he meets the paralytic – it is crucial that they see that Jesus knows that the man is paralyzed spiritually even more than physically. We don't need healing on the outside as much as we need healing on the inside. But in order to prove He has the authority to call us to repentance, He heals the man's legs. **Again**, help students to see the purpose and power of miracles as mini-parables.

Mark 2:13-17

- Help them understand that tax collectors were ostracized by the community because they stole money from everyone. Also, point out that “sinners” are simply Gentiles, with whom the Jews would have nothing to do.
- Spend a lot of time exploring who the “tax collectors” and “sinners” are in their own lives. Have them describe what their campus is like, and where “those” people hang out.
- Then let them struggle with verse 17 and its implications for their own lives. Come up with at least one specific goal.

Mark 2:18-22

- this is a confusing passage for students. Basically, Jesus is using examples from the world of 1st century Palestine to break it all down for them. Help them to see that we all have our own little “box” that we put God into. We have huge preconceptions of how God will act, what He is like, etc. Jesus came on earth to blow these preconceptions away – to put “new wine into new wineskins.”

Mark 2:23-3:6

- Make sure students understand who the Pharisees are. Use a Bible dictionary if you aren't sure.
- Students may not know that the Pharisees had invented hundreds of rules about keeping the Sabbath.... If you have time, try to find some of the meticulous ways they sought to keep them. They believed that if they followed every particle of Sabbath law that they would guarantee God's approval. Since the 4th Commandment forbid working, they got angry at Jesus, ignoring the harmlessness of what He was doing on the Sabbath.

- In chapter 3, Jesus then shows how foolish the frantic Sabbath-keeping of the Pharisees was. They are so stubborn and hardened, they cannot rejoice in the healing of a suffering man.
- Have them look again at 2:27. Help them explore the “gift” of Sabbath. God wants us to rest one day a week in order to enjoy the love of God and get our perspective. Spend time talking about schedule, stress, time management, quiet times, and keeping the Sabbath. Set some practical goals.

THIS IS ENOUGH FOR SEVERAL WEEKS of great Bible study – have fun!!

BOOK OF MARK TODAY'S PASSAGE: _____



OBSERVATION: AS YOU READ, ASK YOURSELF:

- What **STANDS OUT** to you?
- Do I know the real **MEANINGS** of all the key words in the text?
- **WHO** are the people named in this passage? **WHAT** do I learn about them from this passage?
- What other passages from scripture are **QUOTED**?
- What is **COOL** or **CONFUSING** in this passage?



INVESTIGATION:

What words do you need to look up?

Where does everything happen? Do you have a map in the back of your Bible?



APPLICATION:

Be **PRACTICAL**. Don't just make simple, vague goals. The Bible can apply to our daily lives - **LIVE OUT** the meaning of the words you learn, the actions you see in the life of Christ, and count on the promises you receive in Christ.

What is ONE THING you can apply from today's passage?