

Mark Chapters 1–8: THE EARLY TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

- ◆ Who was Mark?
- ◆ Who was John the Baptizer?
- ◆ Jesus chooses His disciples
- ◆ Jesus the friend of sinners
- ◆ God's power over Satan
- ◆ The miracles of Jesus
- ◆ Healing in the name of Jesus
- ◆ The teachings of Jesus

THIS BOOK tells about the early days of the ministry of Jesus on earth. It tells about His teachings and His healings and what it means to be a follower of Jesus today.

MANNA PUBLICATIONS supply Bible teaching commentaries written by Fred Morris. For many years Fred, and his wife Lorna, travelled round the world teaching and preaching. When they returned home they wrote these notes for printing and selling wherever there was a need for basic foundational Christian teaching.

THIS REVISED UK edition is written in easy-to-read Worldwide English which will add understanding and also speed up translation into other languages. It gives basic teaching for all readers plus additional notes for Bible students, teachers and pastors.

THESE BOOKS are to use on your own or to study in a group. They will teach you God's truth. They will help you to know God's Son, Jesus Christ. They will help you to talk about your faith in God. They will stop you from going the wrong way in life. They will help to lead you closer to Christ. They provide food for life.

WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you read the Bible and use these commentaries.

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FOUNDATIONAL BIBLE TEACHING COMMENTARIES

'The secret of God's Kingdom has been given to you' (Mark 4:11)



THE EARLY TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

The Good News told by Mark

A Bible Teaching Commentary in easy-to-read Worldwide English for personal or group study

by Fred Morris



Mark Part 1

Chapters 1 to 8

To the reader or leader

These Bible commentaries explain the truth about God's Word in a way that is easy to read and understand. You can use these books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. In a group study, each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.

There is a lot of information in this book. Please study it slowly and thoughtfully. Ask God to help you apply the things you learn to your own life and situation.

 **Now Read:** Where you see this, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible passage first before reading the words in this book.

 **Talk about:** Where you see this, there are questions that can be asked in a group study. They also help the reader to understand the Bible verses.

 Where you see this sign, the question requires more time and meditation.

 **Multiple choice questions.** Where you see this, there are questions with three possible answers; some are right answers, some are wrong answers. These questions help you to think carefully about what you are reading. The answers to these questions are given at the back of the book. You can use the questions as a personal test.

 Where you see **ruled boxes**, the information inside is mainly for Bible students, teachers and preachers.

Additional Bible readings are there to give you important information. God will use them to speak to you. This is why you should check all readings now or later and use them for study at home. Some readings are from the Old Testament (O.T.), which we call 'the holy writings'. That is the part of the Bible written before Jesus Christ lived on this earth. Some readings are from the New Testament (N.T.), the part of the Bible which was written after Jesus Christ lived on this earth.

Manna Bible commentaries give God's truth as a foundation for all believers. The people leading the study should add applications and experiences from their own Christian life and culture.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Mark Chapters 1 to 3

1. b, 2. a, 3. c, 4. a, 5. c, 6. b, 7. a.

Mark Chapters 4 to 6

1. c, 2. a, 3. c, 4. b, 5. b, 6. c.

Mark Chapters 7 and 8

1. c, 2. c, 3. c, 4. b.

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Jesus wants His followers to put God first in their lives and to **spread the Good News** (8:35). For some people, it might cost them their lives. Are we ready to do this? Jesus sent us the Holy Spirit to live in us to give us peace, joy and hope plus the power to overcome sin. Our God is three-in-one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Jesus also speaks about His Second Coming (8:38). We will speak more about that in the second part of Mark's Gospel.



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. What two questions did Jesus ask about himself (8:27–29)? What is your answer?
2. What should we remember when 'death to self' seems too hard? (8:35)
3. What is more precious than a person's body? (8:36)
4. Are we afraid that we will lose our lives if we follow Jesus? What should we be even more afraid of? (8:38)



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Based on Mark chapters 7 and 8

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c.

Answers are given at the end

1. Why did Jesus not like what the Pharisees said and did?
 - a) They did not listen to Him.
 - b) They told His disciples to wash their hands and pots.
 - c) Their hearts were not right.
2. Jesus healed the Greek lady's daughter because —
 - a) He liked her.
 - b) she told Him a sad story.
 - c) she believed in Him.
3. Jesus is —
 - a) one of the prophets.
 - b) John the Baptizer come back from the grave
 - c) the Messiah.
4. Why did Jesus tell Peter that he was not thinking like God?
 - a) He did not believe in Jesus.
 - b) He did not want Jesus to die.
 - c) He did not want to go with Jesus.

MARK Part One: Chapters 1-8

The Good News of God written by Mark, is the second of four books in the Bible about the life of Jesus Christ. A young Christian believer named John Mark wrote it between AD42 and AD44, several years after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. He learned from Peter most of the things that Jesus said and did. Peter was one of the disciples, or followers, of Jesus. Mark probably took notes when Peter was teaching and preaching. These things took place in Judea and Galilee, which we now call Israel. Mark's book tells us a lot about the last week before Jesus was nailed to the cross to die. It ends when Jesus comes to life again and goes back to heaven to be with His Father, God. God's Hebrew name is Yahweh. He is the one and only true God whom Jews and Christians worship. His Son is Jesus, the Messiah, God's Messenger and the Saviour of the world. He was born 2000 years ago to a Jewish girl called Mary.

These first eight chapters of Mark's Gospel tell us about the early part of Jesus' work of teaching and healing. The Good News is that God loves us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for us. Jesus took the punishment that we deserve for our sins, so that we can be saved. He is our saviour. And all people everywhere who worship God and believe in Jesus can have everlasting life with them. The Jewish name for Jesus is Yeshua or Joshua which means 'salvation' or 'salvation of Yahweh'.

WHO WAS MARK?

John Mark was a Jew who had a non-Jewish family name, Markus. Peter loved Mark and called him 'my son' (1 Peter 5:13). Mark's mother lived in a large house in Jerusalem, the chief city of Israel in the region of Judea. She heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and believed. Other Christians met at her house to worship and pray to God (Acts 12:12).

Most religious leaders had disciples and men gave up their work to follow a leader and learn from him. Mark followed Peter who followed Jesus. He heard Peter speaking about Jesus and about what He did. Young Mark believed that Jesus was the Messiah (Christ).

For a very long time, the Jewish people waited for a great leader promised by God (a Saviour or Messiah). The people thought the Messiah would save them from their enemies, the Romans, who ruled their land.

Mark was a cousin of Barnabas. After the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mark went with Paul and Barnabas to tell the Good News in Asia Minor (Turkey). But then he left them and went back home to Jerusalem. Paul did not want to take Mark on his next preaching trip, so Barnabas took Mark with him and went to Cyprus. Later, Paul and Mark became friends again. Paul wrote from prison, 'Mark comforted me' (Colossians 4:11).

Mark wrote that Jesus Christ is 'Son of God'. Jesus called Himself 'Son of Man'. This was the name God gave to his prophets, the men chosen to speak God's

message to the people (Ezekiel 12:2). But God also said that Jesus was His Son (Mark 1:11; 9:7).

TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. What do we know about Mark?
2. How did Mark learn about Jesus?
3. How is Jesus different from the other prophets of God?

WHAT DOES MARK SAY ABOUT JESUS?

God chose a young girl called Mary to give birth to Jesus (read Luke 1: 26–35; 2:1–20). In the first part of Mark's Gospel, we read about the work that Jesus did when he had reached the age of 30. Jesus came to do the work of God, His Father. He fed the hungry (Mark 8:1–13). He healed the sick (2:1–12). He told demon spirits to leave people (9:14–32). He raised the dead (5:42). These miracles were signs that showed that He came from God (see John 1:14). Mark wanted us to know that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus is the Gospel, the Good News that God will forgive our sins if we believe in His Son.

The Bible says that all people have sinned (Romans 3:23). We are born full of sin, so God sent His Son to save us. The greatest thing that Jesus did was to die for us. We deserve to be punished for our sins. He came to suffer and to die. But He was born without sin. We deserve to die because we are sinners. Jesus did not deserve to die. But the Bible teaches that Jesus came to die for us, in our place, so that God can take away our sins, if we believe in His Son. These things were promised in the holy writings, hundreds of years before Jesus was born.



20 things the Holy Writings say about Jesus in the Old Testament (OT)

And how they came true in the New Testament (NT)

1. Jesus is the promised Messiah (Christ), God's Son, our Saviour. (OT: Deuteronomy 18:15; Jeremiah 23:5; Isaiah 53:12. NT: Matthew 16:16; Mark 1:11; Luke 2:11; Hebrews 7:25.)
2. Jesus is the promised healer. (OT: Isaiah 35:5,6; NT: Mark 2:12; 7:35; 8:25.)
3. Jesus came from King David's family. (OT: Isaiah 9:7; NT: Matthew 1:1.)
4. God promised that Abraham's family would bless all the nations on earth. (OT: Genesis 18:18. NT: Matthew 1:1; Acts 3:25.)
5. Jesus was born in Bethlehem from the family/region of Judah/Judea. (OT: Micah 5:2. NT: Matthew 2:1.)
6. Jesus was born to a young Jewish woman before she was married and before she had sex with a man. (OT: Isaiah 7:14. NT: Matthew 1:18.)



Spreading the Good News

Jesus told His disciples to teach everyone everything that He taught them (Matthew 28:20). Some preachers teach the Good News of Jesus (the Gospel) by telling people that God loves everyone and will bless them and give them good things if they follow Jesus. They forget to say that God is a Holy God and hates sin. They forget to say we must repent. They forget to say that it is often costly to follow Jesus. Jesus came to tell the whole truth from God (John 18:37). God knows that we deserve to be punished for our sins and need to be set free from our sins. Jesus came to take the punishment for us by dying on the cross. If we repent and believe this then we can be forgiven and set free from our sins and be accepted by God. He can then give us a new purpose in this life and hope for the future, even though there will be troubles at times. We must be ready to pick up our cross and follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). It is the whole Gospel that we must teach and preach:

GOD LOVES YOU even though
you do wrong things and think wrong things.

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ,
to show you the right way to God.

Then God let him die on a cross to show His love for us.
Jesus took the punishment we deserve for our sins. He paid the price.

Jesus died for people like you and me.

After three days God gave Jesus a new life.
If you believe in Jesus and say sorry for your sins,
he will forgive you and give you a new life.

He will free you from your bad ways.

Then you will be put right with God
and you will live with Him for ever.
God has freely done all this for you
even when you think there is no hope.

He will be with you at all times and in all difficulties.

things that please Him. The cross means death to self, but it also means life to the new person that is born inside us.

The person who wants to follow Jesus must forget himself. He must forget his own selfish desires. Jesus did that every moment of His life. He gave up His glory and power and came to earth as a baby to do what the Father wanted (Philippians 2:7–8). Now He offers His followers the same way of life and calling. He gave up everything to seek and to save those who were lost.

When Jesus told His followers to pick up their cross and follow Him (8:34), He was also thinking of the time in the future when men took Him to a hill outside Jerusalem and nailed Him on a cross.

'But what about you,' Jesus asked. 'Who do you say I am?' (8:29). Peter answered, 'You are the Christ.' Peter meant the Christ, the Messiah, the King that God had promised. Jesus was pleased with this answer.

'This understanding was not given to you by man,' Jesus told Peter, 'but by My Father in Heaven.'

A PATHWAY OF SUFFERING

Towards the end of His teaching, He told His disciples what would happen to Him. He was going to suffer many things and then die (8:31).

He spoke to them plainly, not in parables. Soon He would be killed. The Son of Man would be taken away :

- by His own people,
- by the religious leaders,
- by the chief priests who held great power.

They would all shout 'Kill Him!' But after three days, He would rise again from the dead. Peter was very upset about all this. He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke Him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to You!' (Matthew 16:22).

Jesus looked at Peter and the others. He said, 'Get behind Me, Satan. You are not thinking (and saying) the things of God!' (8:33). In a very short space of time, Peter had changed from listening to God ('You are the Christ') to listening to Satan.

What Peter said was what Peter wanted. Satan had put these words into Peter's mouth. Satan would use any means to stop or destroy God's plan to save men and women from their sins. Peter did not understand the purposes of God.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS

Peter did not want to follow Jesus if He was going to be killed. So Jesus warned them all that they could be disciples, but there was a price to pay. Every disciple had to 'take up his own cross'. The 'cross' is a way of life. Each person must be ready to die to themselves (give up their own way of life) and accept the will of God for their lives. That is what Peter needed to do.

For the Christian, Christ's cross is not a pretty thing. It is not a thing of gold on a chain. His cross means death to our old life. When we 'take up' the cross of Jesus, we live to serve God. We do only those



7. As a baby, Jesus was taken to Egypt for safe keeping. (OT: Hosea 11:1. NT: Matthew 2:14,15.)
8. Jesus moved to the region of Galilee to teach the people. (OT: Isaiah 9:1, 2. NT: Matthew 4:13,14.)
9. Jesus was 'the great prophet' spoken of by Moses. (OT: Deuteronomy 18:15. NT: John 6:14; Acts 3:22.)
10. Jesus is our priest forever, who forgives our sin. (OT: Psalm 110:4; NT: Hebrews 6:20.)
11. Jesus was wise and understanding. (OT: Isaiah 11:2. NT: Luke 2:52.)
12. Jesus was not wanted by His own people. (OT: Isaiah 53:3; NT: John 1:11.)
13. Jesus would be welcomed into Jerusalem as a humble king, riding on a donkey. (OT: Zechariah 9:9. NT: Matthew 21:2-9 and John 12:12-16.)
14. Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples. (OT: Psalm 41:9. NT: Mark 14:10, 18-20.)
15. Jesus was betrayed for 30 silver coins. (OT: Zechariah 11:12. NT: Matthew 26:15.)
16. Jesus had untrue things said against Him. (OT: Psalm 27:12. NT: Matthew 26:59-61.)
17. Jesus did not speak when He was put on trial. (OT: Isaiah 53:7. NT: Matthew 26:62, 63.)
18. Jesus was put to death with criminals. (OT: Isaiah 53:12. NT: Matthew 27:38.)
19. The hands and feet of Jesus were pierced through. (OT: Psalm 22:16. NT: John 19:37 and 20:27.)
20. The people laughed at Jesus and said bad things about him. (OT: Psalm 22:6-8. NT: Matthew 27:39, 40.)

There are many other references in the New Testament to the Old Testament. In Mark's gospel alone there are over 50 references and nearly 90 in Matthew's gospel.

THE FIRST DAYS OF JESUS ON EARTH



Matthew chapters 1 and 2 and Luke chapters 1 and 2

Matthew, Luke and John also wrote their own stories of the Good News about Jesus Christ. Matthew and Luke tell us about the birth of Jesus and His cousin, John the Baptizer. (Mark does not tell us about these things in his story.)

Roman armies were in control of Israel when Jesus and John were born. Caesar Augustus, in Rome, sent the order to his soldiers in Israel to get the Jews to sign their names on a list (Luke 2:1). He wanted to count how many Jews lived in Israel. To do this the Jews had to travel to their home town. A man called Joseph was engaged to a young girl called Mary and they travelled to his home town of Bethlehem to sign their names.

Mary was pregnant. It is a bad thing for an unmarried woman to have a child. When Joseph knew that Mary was going to have a baby, he thought it best not to marry Mary (Matt. 1:19). But an angel of God spoke to him in a dream. Then he understood that this pregnancy was God's miracle. He took Mary as his wife but did not have sex with her until after the baby Jesus was born (1:25).

It was while they were in Bethlehem that Jesus was born. Jesus was not the son of Joseph. He was the Son of God, born from a seed planted in Mary by the Holy Spirit of God (Matt. 1:18,20). God did this so that His Son could be born without sin in His life.

IMPORTANT MEN COME TO MEET BABY JESUS

Local shepherds were told where to find and worship the baby Jesus (Luke 2:12). A vision of angels from God told them of this wonderful miracle. God wanted the ordinary, simple people to know about the birth of His Son in Bethlehem. He was the promised Messiah, or Christ.

At this time, Herod was ruling over Israel for Caesar. Herod was a very wicked, cruel king. One day, important men from the East went to Herod's palace. We usually call them 'the three wise men'. They were looking for the new baby King of the Jews in Israel. They had followed a new star in the sky (Matt. 2:2). But Jesus was not at the king's palace. Where was He? Herod asked the religious leaders to tell him. They read what the prophet Micah said in the holy writings that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). That is where the important men found the baby Jesus. Wise people should read their Bible. Then they will be led in the right direction. But Herod did not want a Jew to become king in his place. So he killed all the babies in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:16). Sadly, it was information from the important men that caused the wicked king to do this.



JESUS Our Saviour: fully God, fully man

The Bible teaches that Jesus is God in human form. He is fully God, created by a miracle of the Holy Spirit in Mary's womb. He was fully human, knowing the same feelings we know, but without sin. God chose to live in the world that He made by being born into it as a baby. Jesus was the son of Mary. The Holy Spirit of God planted the seed into Mary.

This is why Jesus is called the Son of God. And the words of Jesus are the words of God whom Jesus called 'Father'. Jesus shows us what God is really like and He tells us the truth of God. He knows what is in the heart of God.

Jesus is also called the Son of Man. For over 30 years He lived as a human being. He lived like we do, knowing hunger and pain, joy and friendships, sorrow and loneliness, helpless as a baby, giving orders as man, but obeying His Father and suffering a cruel death.

Jesus took their loaves of bread. 'He gave thanks to God, broke them and gave them to the disciples' to give to the people (8:6). The disciples also had a few small fish with them. Jesus gave thanks to God. The disciples then shared in performing the miracle (8:7). They obeyed Jesus and distributed the food. When we obey Jesus and have faith in Him, we open the way for a miracle to take place. About 4000 men, as well as women and children, ate the food and were filled.

After Jesus had sent the people away, He got into a boat with His disciples and went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. This was on the west side of the lake where the Jews lived.

There, the Pharisees 'asked for a sign from Heaven' (8:11). They did this to test Him, because they wanted to see for themselves His great power. They had no faith, and their questions made Jesus sad and tired. 'No sign will be given to you,' He said (8:12) 'except the sign of Jonah' (Matthew 12:39). By this, Jesus meant He would be in the tomb or grave for three days (Matthew 12:40).

While the disciples were sailing up to Bethsaida, Jesus said, 'Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and the yeast of Herod' (8:15). The disciples must have looked confused. They thought that Jesus had said this because they had forgotten to buy bread. Jesus was warning them about sin and evil. 'Don't let your lack of faith be like theirs,' He said.

The 'bread' of this world does not last. Only Jesus will satisfy forever those people who believe in Him. He is 'the bread of life'.

In Bethsaida, some people brought a blind man to Jesus and begged Him to touch his eyes (8:22). Perhaps this was the only time that Jesus had two attempts at healing someone. The disciples were like this blind man. They could not 'see' clearly at first the things that Jesus taught about the Kingdom of Heaven. They needed to 'focus' more clearly on what Jesus was saying and doing.



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. Compare 7:33-34 with 8:23
2. What truths do we learn about Jesus in 8:2,3,12 and 17?



What level of motivation (8:2,3), faith (8:4,5) and commitment (8:6-8) do we need for miracles to happen?

PETER BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST

They were walking through the villages when Jesus asked His disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' (8:27). He wanted to hear what they would say. He wanted them to say what they really believed.

They answered, 'Some say that you are John the Baptizer, others say Elijah, and still others, one of the prophets' (8:28).

His time to 'give bread' to the Gentiles (non-Jews) would come later (Mark 16:15).

The woman answered, 'Even little dogs eat the crumbs that the children leave under the table' (7:28). She showed she did have faith. She was not too proud to come to a Jew. Jesus was very pleased with her answer and He told her that her daughter was healed (7:29). It was as simple as that!

The Kingdom of God is for all people so this woman pushed in even though she was not a Jew. Maybe she was the first in her town (Matthew 8:13; 11:12).

Sadly, many of the religious Jews would not believe in Jesus. But strangers and ordinary people in the crowd had great faith in Jesus. Jesus accepts anyone who trusts in Him.

JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO WAS DEAF AND DUMB

From Tyre, Jesus travelled a long way round to go back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (see map). He continued to perform miracles among the non-Jews. After travelling about 100 miles (150 km), Jesus healed a man who was deaf and could not speak very well. Notice that the man was healed through the people who brought him to Jesus in faith.

TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. Why do you think Jesus spoke to the woman this way before healing her daughter (7:27)?
2. What blessing did the Gentile woman ask Jesus for?
3. What did she believe about Jesus?
4. How do we know that she understood more about Jesus than many of the Jews?

 What things did Jesus say and do to the deaf and dumb man (7:33–34) before he was healed? Are we right to expect instant miracles? Do we give up hope if we do not get answers straight away?

Mark 8:1–38

JESUS MAKES THE DISCIPLES UNDERSTAND

In this chapter, the disciples learn a lot about themselves and about Jesus:

- a) The disciples have little faith and hard hearts (8:17–21).
- b) Peter said who Jesus really was (8:29).
- c) Jesus told them about His death and resurrection (8:31).
- d) His followers must take up their cross and follow Jesus (8:34).
- e) Jesus spoke of His Second Coming (8:38).

A large crowd listened to Jesus as He spoke (8:1). They had been with Him for three days and had not had anything to eat. There were no shops and no food, but the disciples had seven loaves with them.

Mary and Joseph escaped to Egypt with Jesus (Matt. 2:13). God's angel told them what to do and later guided them back to Nazareth (2:22,23). This was the town where Jesus lived for nearly 30 years of His life on earth. People who lived there thought He was the son of Joseph, the carpenter.

Jesus increased in wisdom as He grew older (Luke 2:52) but many people could not believe that He was the Son of God. The angels said that Jesus came to be a Saviour, the promised Christ or Messiah (Luke 2:11). The prophet Simeon said that Jesus came to bring the light of God to non-Jews and glory to the Jews (2:32). The prophetess Anna said that Jesus was the Saviour (Redeemer) that everyone in Jerusalem had been waiting for (2:38).

The Gospel according to Luke also tells us about the birth of John the Baptizer, six months earlier than Jesus (Luke 1:5–24; 57–66). His birth was also a miracle of God (1:7,13). But he was not God's son. He was the son of Zechariah. Mark tells us all about God's plan for John (see below).

TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. The angel of God spoke to the father of John (Luke 1:13–20) and the mother of Jesus (1:26–38) and to Joseph (Matt. 1:20–25). How did they respond to what they were told? How can we learn from this?
2. How did the important men from the East receive guidance about King Jesus? How did the shepherds learn about Jesus? How should we seek guidance from God in our own lives (John 14:26)?
3. What did the following people think about the birth of Jesus: Mary, King Herod, the important men from the East, the shepherds in Bethlehem, Simeon and Anna in Jerusalem? What do you think about the birth of Jesus? Who do you believe Jesus is?

 What was the purpose of God for Jesus as revealed by the angels and the prophets (Matthew 1:20–22, 2:6; Luke 1:32–35, 2:10–11)?

Mark 1:1–13 (Also in Matthew 3:1–17 and 4:1–11; John 1:19–34)

JOHN THE BAPTIZER PREPARES THE WAY FOR JESUS

In the first 13 verses we meet all the main people in Mark's Gospel:

- John the Baptizer, who preached in the desert (1:4).
- Jesus, the Son of God, who came from heaven (1:9).
- God, the Holy Spirit, who came upon Jesus and guided Him (1:10, 12).
- God, the Father, who spoke from heaven (1:11).
- Satan, who came to tempt Jesus (1:13).
- The angels who helped Jesus (1:13).

John the Baptizer dressed like a prophet of God. He lived and spoke like a messenger from God (1:6). He fulfilled the prophecies that Malachi and Isaiah gave 700 years before. They spoke about hearing the voice of a messenger calling 'Make the way ready for the Lord!' (Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3). Mark used the prophet's words to tell us who John was (Mark 1:2,3).

God filled John with His Spirit even before he was born, to do this work (Luke 1:13,41). John came to tell the people 'Stop doing wrong things and be baptized' (Mark 1:4).

When people said that they were sorry for the wrong things they had done, John baptized them. He put them under the water and brought them up again. This showed the world that they had repented. 'Repent' means that we are sorry for our sins and that we want to turn from them and obey God. Our sins include everything wrong that we think, say or do and also the good things that we forget to do. Sin separates us from God, who is perfectly good and holy and without sin. Going under the water is a way of showing that God has washed away our old lives and we are making a fresh, clean start with Him.

God had promised to deliver the people of Israel from their enemies and to bless them again. God had promised to send a Saviour, or Messiah. Many prophets in the holy writings spoke of this, but there had been no special prophet for 400 years and many people had given up hope. Then John came! He came to prepare the way for Jesus, the Messiah. John was not the Messiah. John told the people about Jesus – he said that someone very important was coming (1:7,8)

TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. What did John the Baptizer come to do (1:4,8)?
2. What did John say about Jesus (1:7)?
3. What did John ask people before he baptized them (1:4)?
4. What does 'repent' mean?
5. What does baptism mean?

 In what ways can we prepare the way for the ministry of Jesus?

JOHN BAPTIZES JESUS

Jesus came from Galilee to the River Jordan and John baptized Him (1:9; Matthew 3:13; John 1:32-34). Jesus did not have to repent, for He had no sin (Hebrews 4:15). John baptized Jesus because it was the right thing to do (Matthew 3:15). It was God's plan and it was right in order to show others. John came to prepare the way for the work of Jesus. This was God's plan for John and for Jesus.

When Jesus came up out of the water, John heard and saw three great miracles:

- a) The sky was 'open'.

that we should not let religious traditions stop us doing what is right. We must obey the whole of the Bible, not just one part of it.

Later, the disciples asked Him again about the parable of the unclean heart. 'Don't you understand?' Jesus asked them, and He told them again that out of people's hearts come evil thoughts, thoughts of sex, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, cheating and lying. All these evils come from inside a person and make a person unclean (7:21-23).

So washing our hands doesn't make our hearts clean. Only God can make us clean on the inside. These Jewish leaders from Jerusalem looked good on the outside but God wants us to be good on the inside (7:6). Some Pharisees had faith in religious traditions instead of obeying God's word. That is why Jesus called them hypocrites; they were pretending to be good (7:6; Luke 11:37-54; Luke 12:1-3). People do not need to keep the old Jewish laws about clean and unclean food (7:19). (The Jews were not allowed to eat some kinds of meat.) It is not the food that matters. It is the things we think and do which are important to God.

These Pharisees were destroying the truth of God given in the holy writings (7:13).

TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. Are the words of Isaiah from the holy writings still true today (7:6,7)?
2. Compare the teachings of Jesus (7:21-23) with the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17).
3. Do your church rulings and traditions follow the teachings of Christ?

 What views does Jesus have on Old Testament prophecy, laws, leaders and teachers (7:6-13)?

Mark 7:24-37

A GENTILE WOMAN HAS FAITH

Jesus left that place and went to Tyre on the Mediterranean Sea coast (7:24). Tyre and Sidon were very old cities on the coast of the Great Sea (Mediterranean). The people who lived there were Gentiles, not Jews. They worshipped other gods.

Tyre was 40 miles (60 km) away from the Sea of Galilee. Jesus did not want people to know where He was. But even in this place, the people noticed Jesus.

A woman saw Jesus and called after Him. She wanted Jesus to heal her daughter. This woman was not a Jew but she knelt at Jesus' feet and begged for His help.

'First let the children eat,' Jesus told her. 'It is not right to throw their bread to dogs.' Jesus meant that he had come to teach the truth of His Kingdom to the Jewish nation first. She knew what He meant (John 1:11; Matthew 10:5,6).



Mark 7:1–23 (Also in Matthew 15:1–20)

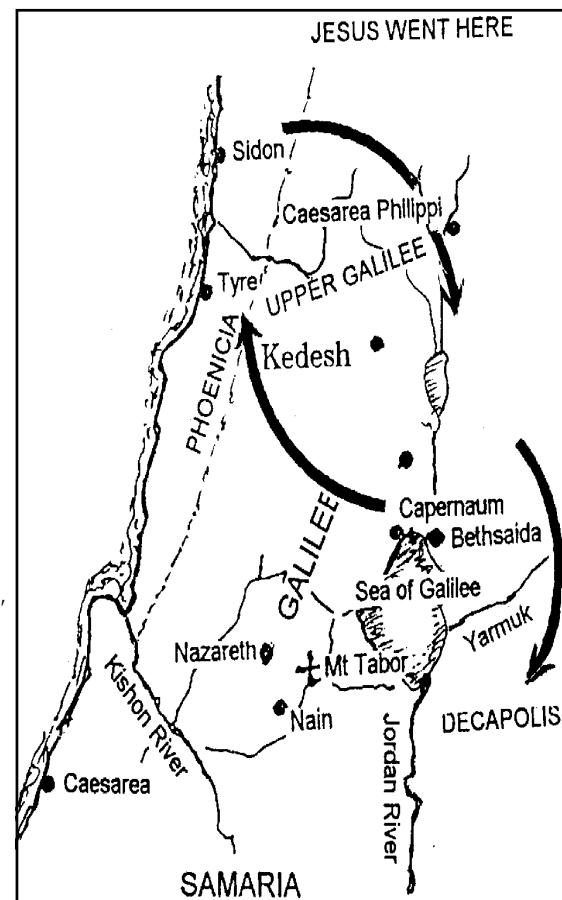
THE TEACHINGS OF THE PHARISEES

Religious Jews always washed their hands before they ate food. And they washed them in a special way. The disciples ate without washing their hands. This was against the religious ways of the Pharisees.

Jesus called some of these Pharisees hypocrites. They only pretended to be holy. They washed their hands but their hearts were not clean. 'Nothing outside you can make you unclean,' Jesus told them. 'It is what comes out of you that makes you unclean' (7:15). God sees into a person's heart. He knows who we are and what we are really thinking inside (Proverbs 16:2). Jesus said, 'You are not following the commands of God. You are holding on to the teaching of men' (7:8).

'Isaiah was right about you,' Jesus told them (Isaiah 29:13). The prophet spoke God's words against the hypocritical Jewish leaders. These holy writings should make them stop and think, but the hypocritical Pharisees refused God's word and kept to their traditions – the things their fathers had taught them to do. Washing hands in a special way before they ate was one of their traditions.

Jesus told them that they were changing God's Laws. He gave them an example: they were not obeying the command, 'Honour your father and your mother'. 'You put in its place your own rule.' They allowed a son to stop helping his father and mother by saying 'this thing is *corban*. *Corban* meant 'an offering to God' and was usually money. In this way a man held back help that his parents needed (Mark 7:11–12). We must learn from this



b) The Holy Spirit rested on Jesus.

c) God spoke from Heaven saying, 'This is My dear Son... I am very pleased with Him.'

Christians believe that Jesus did not become the Son of God while on earth – He was and is the eternal Son of God who was at the beginning of time and will be at the end of time.

Christians believe in three persons being One God: Father Son and Holy Spirit.

John said, 'I saw the Spirit coming from the sky. He (the Holy Spirit) came down on Him (Jesus) like a dove. He stayed on Him. I myself did not know who He (Jesus) was. But He (the Father) who sent me to baptize people in water told me. He said, "You will see the Spirit coming from the sky on a man. That man will baptize people in the Holy Spirit." I saw the Spirit resting on Him, and I have told you. This man is the Son of God' (John 1:32–34 TJB).

The difference between the baptism given by John and the baptism given by Jesus is:

- John baptised in water as a sign of repentance and the forgiveness of sins (1:4)
- Jesus baptised in water for repentance and forgiveness, just as John did AND promised a baptism of Holy Spirit power for all believers (1:8; Luke 24:49).

When John baptised Jesus (1:9) there was no need for Jesus to confess His sins for:

- He had no sin (Hebrews 4:15)
- He was and is the Son of God (1:1)
- He was full of the Holy Spirit (1:10–11).

These are fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

After this Jesus was sent by God's Spirit to be tested by Satan (see Matthew 4:3–9.)



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. How did John know who Jesus was (John 1:32–34)?
2. Why did Jesus ask John to baptize Him in the river (Matthew 3:15)?
3. What did God the Father say about Jesus (1:11)?
4. How did Satan try to spoil God's plan (Matthew 2:16; 4:1–11)?
5. Say in your own words the truths about the Christian faith given in verses 1, 8–12.
6. What truths do we learn about Satan and about angels in verse 13?





Mark 1:14–20 (Also in Matthew 4:1–22; Luke 4:14,15 and 5:2–11)

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST

John the Baptizer called men to repent and believe in Jesus the Messiah (Christ). We repent when we are sorry for our sins and turn away from them. John told King Herod that it was wrong for him to marry his brother's wife, so Herod put John in prison. But Herod did not repent. Later he killed John (6:14–29).

But Satan does not take God by surprise and nothing happens to us by chance. God knows everything and He has all the power. He is in control of everything that happens (Isaiah 46:9–10).

For hundreds of years, the Jewish people had looked for a Messiah. They wanted a leader who would deliver them from the power of their enemies, the Romans. But God first wanted them to turn back to Him and away from their bad ways. The holy writings tell us that many good people of God had been killed trying to save the Jews from their bad ways and from the bad ways of other people. The Jewish prophets told of One who would come and save them. This Person or 'Saviour' (Messiah) would come to save all peoples – Jews and non-Jews. This Person would recover for us everything that was lost when Adam first sinned. He would pay for it with His blood. This Person was Jesus. Jesus told them that the Kingdom of God was near. It would be a place in the hearts of people when He saves them and rules over them.

Mark 1:14,15 are key verses: they give the reason for the ministry of Jesus. He preached God's Good News and told people, 'Turn away from your sins and believe'.



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. What did Jesus teach the people (1:14,15)?
2. Why do people have to repent (1:15)? Once again – what does 'repent' mean?

JESUS CALLS WORKING MEN TO FOLLOW HIM

Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee. He saw two brothers, Simon and Andrew, throwing a fishing net into the lake (1:16). Jesus called to them, 'Come

Names that Mark gave to Jesus	
Jesus Christ (1:1)	Son of Man (2:28 and 8:31)
Son of God (1:1 and 3:11)	Lord of the Sabbath (2:28)
Jesus of Nazareth (1:24)	Son of the Most High (5:7)
The Holy One of God (1:24)	The carpenter (6:3)
Lord (1:3 and 7:28)	Mary's son (6:3)
	The Christ (Messiah) (8:29)



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Based on Mark chapters 4 to 6

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c.

Answers are given at the end

1. The seed that fell on good ground and gave much fruit is like the people who hear God's message and —
 - a) work very hard.
 - b) have no trouble in their lives.
 - c) hold it in their hearts.
2. The kingdom of God is like a mustard plant because —
 - a) it grows big from a small seed.
 - b) it is useful for birds and seeds.
 - c) it grows only in good soil.
3. The man with a bad spirit —
 - a) ran away from Jesus.
 - b) looked after pigs.
 - c) went home well.
4. The woman was healed by —
 - a) the doctor's medicine.
 - b) touching Jesus in faith.
 - c) paying money.
5. People in the home town of Jesus —
 - a) loved Him.
 - b) didn't believe in Him.
 - c) said He was a prophet.
6. Herod —
 - a) said that John was Elijah.
 - b) wanted to kill John.
 - c) wanted to listen to John.

Christians often complain that the job is too big, but God has given us all that we need, and more (Philippians 4:13). God uses and transforms what we have, but if we hold back, we cannot see Him work miracles with what we have to give.



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. What was the result of Herod not believing in John and Jesus (6:21-29)?
2. Why were the disciples upset to see the crowd?
3. What should we do when God's work is too big for us? How does our faith grow?
4. What truths do we learn about Jesus in 6:31,34 and 41?



When needs are great, do you give up or ignore them or do you do what little you can to help so that Jesus can perform miracles through what you do?



Mark 6:45–56

JESUS WALKS ON THE WATER

Jesus sent away the disciples in a boat. Then He sent away the crowds while He went to the mountain to pray. Jesus saw the disciples having difficulty rowing the boat. He went to them walking on the water. They saw Him and called out in fear. Then they heard a voice, 'Be brave! It is Me. Don't be afraid' (6:50). They knew His voice well. It was not a ghost. He had called to them many times before. They had been afraid but His voice gave them peace. He got into the boat and the storm stopped (6:51).

Sometimes there are 'storms' that come in life. We work hard and struggle because we are afraid and we do not trust God. Then Jesus comes to us and our fears disappear. He brings us peace and strength and faith. Our troubles seem to be less when He is with us.

We see that the disciples still did not have much faith. They followed Jesus and saw God working, and yet they were very surprised when He calmed the storm and walked on water.

As soon as Jesus and His disciples landed at Gennesaret, the crowd ran to Him carrying sick people on mats (6:53-55).



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. Why did Jesus send the disciples away in a boat (6:45,46)?
2. Why do you think Jesus prayed that night instead of sleeping?
3. At the end of Chapter 6, what have the disciples learned about the aims of Jesus, how much He cares for people, and His power?
4. What truths do we learn about Jesus in 6:46,48,50?

and follow Me! He wanted to teach them about God's Kingdom. Note that Jesus called ordinary working men to follow him.

At once they stopped fishing and followed Jesus. It is important to accept the call of Jesus immediately and to follow Him in faith. He gave these fishermen a promise, 'I will make you catch men' – not fish (1:17). They were going to help Jesus to save people from their sins.

Andrew was one of John's disciples. He left John and followed Jesus. Then Andrew went back to his brother Simon and told him, 'We have found the Messiah' (John 1:40,41).

Simon believed Jesus Christ was the Messiah, and became one of Jesus' closest disciples. Later on, Jesus said to Simon, 'Your name will be Cephas'. That is the same as 'Peter' in the Greek language and it means 'rock' (John 1:42). This was the same Peter who taught Mark everything that he knew about Jesus.

Jesus also called Philip to follow Him. Philip asked Nathanael to meet Jesus and he became a disciple also (John 1:43-49). Nathanael said to Jesus, 'You are the Son of God, the King of Israel' (John 1:49). He was probably the first person to know the truth about Jesus, after John the Baptizer. Jesus then confirmed who He was by speaking about the angels of God (John 1:51). Only the Son of God would know the angels of God personally.

There were 12 disciples who gave up everything to follow Jesus.

Jesus was now ready to teach His disciples and to tell other people about God's Kingdom and about God's plans for sinners.



Mark 1:21–28 (Also in Luke 4:31–37)

JESUS BEGINS TO PREACH AND TO HEAL

Jesus went into the synagogue (Jewish religious meeting house) in Capernaum and taught the people (1:21). They were amazed at His teaching. Their own leaders read God's Law to the people every Sabbath day but Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God with great authority, 'as if He had the right to teach them' (1:22). There was power in His words. He said that the Kingdom of God was near and that they could enjoy its blessings.

Satan could not destroy the Word of God but he made it difficult for Jesus to teach and to preach. Jesus' words had so much power in them that they made a man cry out, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come



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to destroy us? Then the man shouted, 'I know who you are – the Holy One of God' (1:24). He had an evil spirit in him, which made him speak in fear like this. Jesus knew that it was not the man who was shouting, but it was the evil spirit inside the man. 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' Jesus told the spirit. Then the demon spirit shook the man and went away. The people were amazed. 'He tells the bad spirits what to do and they obey Him,' they said (1:27).

Notice that Jesus 'would not let the demons speak because they knew who He was' (1:25,34). Jesus would not allow Satan, the chief of the demons, say who He was. Jesus did not need Satan to tell the people who He was. It was not long before everybody knew about the teaching of Jesus and that bad spirits obeyed Him (1:27,28). Many believed who He was because of the miracles of Jesus and because He taught the truth of God with authority.

TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. What type of people did Jesus choose for His disciples?
2. What did Jesus mean, 'I will make you fishers of men'?
3. What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus (1:17-20)?
4. Why were the people surprised at Jesus' teaching (1:22)?
5. What happens when evil spirits meet Jesus (1:23-28)?



Mark 1:29–45 (Also in Luke 4:38–44)

PETER INVITES JESUS HOME

Capernaum was a town on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus stayed there, at Simon Peter's house. Simon's mother-in-law was sick so Jesus went to her, took her hand and helped her to get up. Her fever left her immediately and she began to serve them (1:31). Jesus had the power of God in Him to do miracles. He healed the sick.

By the end of the day all the people in the city knew what had happened. They crowded around the door (1:33). They brought sick people and those who had demon spirits to Jesus. Jesus healed them all. But the ministry of Jesus was so popular that sometimes it was difficult for Jesus to teach (1:28, 37, 38, 45).

Next morning Simon Peter called the others and they went out to look for Jesus. He often got up while it was still dark and went to a quiet place to pray (1:35). He talked to His Father in Heaven. Prayer kept him in the power and will



Mark 6:30–44 (Also in Luke 9: 10–17)

JESUS FEEDS FIVE THOUSAND MEN

Jesus could not eat with His disciples 'because so many people were coming and going' (6:31). 'Come with Me ... to a quiet place,' He said. So they got into a boat and went across the lake to Bethsaida (Luke 9:10).

People saw that Jesus was leaving so they ran ahead. They carried the sick, hoping that they would find Him.

Jesus was sorry for them, 'because they were like sheep without a shepherd.' He saw how worried and lonely and lost they were, so He began to teach them. But the disciples were tired. They wished that they could get away from the crowds. They wanted rest and they gave Jesus three good reasons to send the people away:

- a) It was a long way from a place to eat or sleep.
- b) It was already very late.
- c) The people needed to eat food.

Jesus said to the disciples, 'Give them something to eat.' Disciple Philip answered, 'Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a mouthful' (John 6:7). Then Andrew spoke, 'Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will that go among so many people?' (John 6:8).



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Jesus told the people to sit down. 'He gave thanks to God and broke the loaves.' He gave the bread to the disciples to set before the people (Mark 6:41).

The more bread the disciples gave out, the more bread they had for giving out. They were amazed. 'They all ate and were satisfied ...' Notice that Jesus actually used the disciples to carry out the miracle.

Jesus, the Son of God, has chosen us all to help Him feed the multitudes. Some of us are like the little boy – they are the providers. Others are like the disciples – they are the distributors. And out in the world are the hungry multitudes, waiting to be fed the Bread of Life. As we give to Jesus our resources, our time, our skills, our selves, He will use us to give to the hungry multitudes the Food of Life. When we do this, He will enrich us beyond measure. (Tom Hale)

The same power that was in the disciples is in all believers. The disciples went out and taught that people should repent by turning away from their sins and turn back to God (6:12). Notice that they did not go alone, but two at a time (6:7).

When a family welcomed them, they went into the house and taught the people about God. They drove out many demons and they poured a little oil on the sick people and healed them (6:13).

TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. Who had faith in Jesus – Jairus or his daughter?
2. Did the woman who touched Jesus have faith in Jesus or in His robe (clothes)?
3. Why could Jesus not do many miracles in Nazareth?
4. What might happen when you talk to others about Jesus (6:11)?

 Do you show compassion to the poor and needy but walk away from those who refuse salvation and healing? Do you offer to pray for the needs of all whom you meet?

Mark 6:14–29 (Also in Luke 9:7–9)

HEROD KILLS JOHN THE BAPTIZER

King Herod ruled in Galilee. He was not a friend of the Jews. He was a friend of the Romans. He was called ‘king’ because he was governor of a large part of Israel (Matthew 14:1). He heard that Jesus healed sick people and drove out demons. Some people said, ‘God has raised John the Baptizer from the dead.’ Some people said, ‘He is Elijah.’

This troubled Herod, because he had a guilty heart.

He had put John in prison for preaching to him (6:16–18). John had told Herod, ‘It is not right for you to marry your brother Philip’s wife.’ Herod’s wife Herodias hated John, so Herod put him in prison and then Herod was tricked into killing him.

Because Herod had made a promise to Salome, Herodias’ daughter, he sent the order to kill John. He would not say that his promise was wrong in front of all his important guests, and he did not wait to think again about the matter (6:27).

Perhaps Herod wanted to listen to John again, or to see Jesus. Later, Herod wanted to kill Jesus, too. Jesus said, ‘Tell that fox Herod that I must keep going on to Jerusalem’ (Luke 13:33). Jesus did not answer Herod when He stood in front of the king at His trial (Luke 23:9). Jesus knew that this evil man could not stop God’s plan to save people from their sins.

of God, His Father. It is important to set aside a time for prayer in a quiet place.

Peter found Jesus and told Him, ‘Everyone is looking for You!’ It was difficult for Jesus to speak to the people – they wanted to see more miracles (1:37). Jesus replied, ‘Let us go to the nearby villages.’ Jesus did not let his success in one place stop him from preaching elsewhere. He left to preach the Good News of God somewhere else (1:38). ‘That is why I have come.’ So they walked through that part of Galilee and Jesus spoke in their meeting places. He also made the bad spirits come out of people (1:39).

JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO HAD LEPROSY

Jesus also continued to heal sick people. A man who was sick with leprosy (a bad skin disease) came to Him. He knelt down and begged Jesus to make his skin clean. (People with leprosy had to live away from towns and villages.) He said, ‘I know that You can heal me if You want to.’ Jesus was very sorry for him. He put out His hand and touched him. He said, ‘I want to. Be healed.’ At once the man was healed. His skin was clean (1:42). Then Jesus said, ‘Go and show yourself to the priest...’ The man had to do this to prove that he was healed. After that, he could go back to his family. He would not have to live alone any more and shout out, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’

Jesus tried to stop the healed person from telling others (1:44). But the man told everyone he met. Before long it was difficult for Jesus to go from place to place because of the crowds (1:45). They even followed Him into the desert.

TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. When Jesus healed the man who had leprosy, why did He say, ‘Don’t tell anyone’?
2. Why did the man who was healed have to show himself to the priest (Leviticus 14:2)?
3. Why did Jesus pray early in the day (1:35)?
4. Where did Jesus preach? (1:38,39)?

 What are the four parts to the ministry of Jesus (1:14,21,25,31)?
What is the result of the ministry of Jesus (1:17,22,28,32)?
Have you asked God to give you a ministry or vision?

Mark 2:1–12 (Also in Luke 5:18–26)

JESUS HEALS A MAN WHO COULD NOT WALK

Jesus went back to Simon Peter’s house. Many people heard that He was there and they filled the house until there was no more room (2:2). Jesus preached the truth of God to them because He Himself was the Word of God; He was the Truth of God in bodily form. The Word of God is the Good News (Gospel) of God’s love shown in Jesus.

Houses in Israel were usually built with large stones and they had flat roofs made of earth, dried mud or clay. You could walk on them. Some of the buildings had very simple roofs made of wood or branches or tiles.

Four men carried their friend, who could not walk, to the house where Jesus was teaching. They could not get inside, so they went up and moved part of the roof. Then they lowered their sick friend on his bed, right to Jesus' feet. Faith in God always leads people to do brave things. People who have faith do great things because they are trusting in a great God. Jesus saw their faith and He said to the sick man, 'The wrong things you have done are forgiven' (2:5).

Some Pharisees and teachers of the Law of Moses heard what Jesus said, and believed. But many complained, 'Who can forgive the wrong things that people do? Only God can do that (2:7). He is blaspheming.' To blaspheme means to speak against God (Psalm 74:18; Isaiah 52:5; Romans 2:24).

In the times of the Old Testament, the Jewish rulers stoned people to death who blasphemed (Leviticus 24:11–14). But they did not understand the truth of God about Jesus.

Jesus knew what they were thinking. 'Which is easier to say,' He asked, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Get up, lift up your mat and walk?' He said this to show that He was the Son of God, who had power on earth to forgive sins and to heal (2:9,10). Then he healed the man.

Everyone saw the man get up and go home and they praised God saying, 'We have never seen anything like this before!' (2:12).

In 2:10, Jesus calls Himself the 'Son of Man'. 'Son of Man' is used by God in the holy writings to describe Ezekiel, the prophet of God. Daniel and John also call Jesus the 'Son of Man', who is the One with God's authority and power (Daniel 7:13,14; Revelation 1:13-18).

These verses teach us another important truth about Christ which is a foundation of the Christian faith:

- Jesus Christ has the power and authority of God to forgive sins (2:10).

Later, He says, 'I have come to get sinners to follow Me' (2:17). This is still the ministry of Jesus today.



Jairus was still waiting for Jesus. But messengers came to him with bad news: 'Your daughter is dead,' they said, 'Why bother the Teacher any more?'

'Don't be afraid,' Jesus told him, 'just believe' (5:35–36).

Jesus chose Peter, James and John to go into the house with Him. He often kept these three men close to Him (Mark 9:2). They met some mourners who were making loud cries. 'The child is not dead but asleep,' Jesus told them. They laughed at Him (5:40). But Jesus took the girl by the hand and said: 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!' At once, the girl's spirit returned to her body. She stood up and walked around.

Jesus has power to heal people and to give back life. Reach out to Him by faith. Wait on Him in prayer for all your needs. He has promised to answer (Hebrews 13:8; 1 Peter 5:7). Trust Him, as the two people in this Bible passage did.



Mark 6:1–6 (Also in Luke 4:16–30)

NO FAITH AT NAZARETH

Jesus went back to Nazareth, where He grew up (Mark 1:9; Luke 2:39). He taught in the synagogue, the Jewish religious meeting house, on the Sabbath day. Many who heard Him were amazed (6:2). But they did not believe that He was the Messiah, or Christ. And He only healed a few people there because they knew that He was the carpenter's son (6:3). They could not believe in Him. They believed that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary. They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God.

A person may go to many places bringing blessing to others but may not be valued at home. Jealousy is often the reason for this. (ABC)



What is the attitude of our friends, relatives, neighbours, workmates and church fellowship to our witness? What should we say (v2,4) think and do (v5,6)?



Mark 6:6–13 (Also in Luke 9:1–6)

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Jesus left Nazareth and went to other villages in Galilee. His time on earth would soon end, and many places had not heard the Good News, so He sent the disciples out to tell it. Jesus gave them power over evil spirits and they had His power to heal sicknesses (6:7).

Notice that He said to them: 'Take no bread, no bag and no money in your belts.' They were doing this work for God so they did not need to worry about food or money (4:19; 6:8). They could trust in God.

Galilee. These people were non-Jews. Jesus returned to the other side of the lake where the Jews lived (5:21).

Often, witchcraft or sex or drugs or alcohol or gambling destroy members of our family or turn parents into cruel masters. By doing these things we invite demons into our lives. Only Jesus' power can drive these demons out. Only Jesus can give our loved ones freedom and a spirit of love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7). Note that this man came freely to Jesus (5:6). But he was only truly free when Jesus cast out the demons.



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. What truth do we learn about Jesus in 4:39?
2. Why would a man with demons run to meet Jesus (5:2,6)?
3. What do demons know about Jesus (5:7)?
4. What did the villagers see when they reached the graveyard (5:15)?
5. What did the man want to do (5:18)? What did Jesus want him to do (5:19)? What was the result (5:20)?



Mark 5:21–43 (Also in Luke 8:41–56)

THE FAITH OF A SICK WOMAN AND A JEWISH LEADER

Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, came to Jesus and fell at Jesus' feet. 'My little daughter is dying,' he said. 'Please come and put Your hands on her' (5:23).

The crowd pushed around Jesus, and a sick woman came close to Him. She had spent all her money on medicines, but she only got worse. In faith she reached out behind Jesus and touched the bottom of His robe and she was healed.

God always answers our weak faith. Jesus turned and asked, 'Who touched Me?' He knew that power had gone out of Him (5:30; Luke 8:45). The power was not in His clothes. The power was in Jesus.

The woman also knew that she was healed (5:29). She came forward and fell at Jesus' feet. 'Your faith has healed you,' He told her. 'Go in peace. You are free from your suffering' (5:34). No one had ever spoken words like these to this woman before.

Maybe you have a sickness or someone has hurt you. The hurt may have happened years ago. You have tried everything but the pain will not go away. Reach out to Jesus. He is waiting for you to trust Him and believe that He will take your pain.



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Mark 2:13–17 (Also in Luke 5: 27–32)

JESUS MAKES FRIENDS WITH SINNERS

Then Jesus went out and spoke to the crowd beside the lake. He wanted men who would leave everything and follow Him. On this day He found Levi, a taxman, who was also called Matthew. Taxmen worked for the Roman government and the people did not like them because they were not honest. They collected taxes from the Jews and charged them too much money. The Jews called them sinners. Levi left his tax job and followed Jesus (2:14).

Levi invited Jesus and the other disciples to eat at his house. Some Jewish teachers of the Law who were Pharisees were there. 'Why does Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners?' they asked. Jesus told them, 'It is not healthy people who need a doctor. It is ill people who need a doctor. I have not come to call people who think they are right with God. I have come to call sinners to follow Me' (2:17). Jesus wanted to help the people who needed the most help. He wanted to heal their souls as well as their bodies. These people welcomed Jesus but some of the religious leaders didn't want to follow Jesus. They were looking for the Messiah but they did not want Jesus. This is why Jesus chose to minister to the people who would listen to Him rather than to the religious people whose hearts were hard and their minds closed.



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. Is Jesus the only One who can forgive sins like God?
2. Why did Jesus say, 'It is not healthy people who need a doctor'?
3. Why were the Jewish religious leaders unhappy when Jesus had a meal with bad people?
4. Why did bad people come to Jesus? Should we make friends with non-believers?
5. What truths do we learn about Jesus in verses 5,8,10 and 17?



Mark 2:18–22 (Also in Luke 5:33–38)

JESUS SHOWS A BETTER WAY OF DOING THINGS

The Pharisees thought that they were the only good people. They fasted, that is, they did not eat food for a time, and they tried to obey all of God's Law. God said that all people were sinners. 'There is no one who does good, no one...' (Psalm 53:3). Paul says, 'No one is right with God' (Romans 3:10).

John's disciples were fasting. People fasted for many reasons:

- a) to show sorrow when someone had died (Psalm 35:13),
- b) to think more about God and to worship Him (Nehemiah 1:4),
- c) to keep the laws about special holy days like the Jewish Day of Atonement,
- d) to spend more time in prayer for something important or big.

Jesus spoke about a Jewish wedding feast. Jewish brides and bridegrooms opened their houses for the guests to come in. The guests visited, ate well and were happy for the bridegroom and the bride. He said that this was how it would be while He, the Bridegroom, was with them. He would be with them for only a short time and they would be happy. Then He would be killed and they would be sad. And that was the time when they could fast (2:20). Jesus came to show them a better way, but mixing new ideas with old ideas doesn't work very well (2:21,22). He wanted people to leave their old ways and to follow Him.



Mark 2:23–28; 3:1–6 (Also Luke 6:1–11)

JESUS HEALS A MAN ON THE SABBATH

The Pharisees became angry and Jesus knew that they wanted to kill Him (3:6). They argued with Him about what they were not allowed to do on the Lord's Sabbath day. They looked for a way to attack Him through His words.

Jesus healed a man who had a hand that did not work. He made it work again. Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath day. Jesus knew what the Pharisees were thinking so He asked, 'What does the Law say that we should do on the Sabbath day? Good or evil?' (3:4). No one answered.

Earlier they said that Jesus' disciples were not allowed to pick and eat grain on the Sabbath (2:23–24). Jesus was angry with the Pharisees but He was also sorry for them because their hearts were hard (3:5). The Pharisees did not say anything about these things but they went out to plan how to kill Him (3:6). Jesus was kind to the man with the paralysed hand but He pitied the religious leaders because they were hard-hearted. He knew that it is right to do good things on the Sabbath. 'The Sabbath was made for man' to give glory to God (2:27).



The LORD'S SABBATH

'Sabbath' means rest, stopping work. God told Adam how He made the heavens and the earth in six days of work. On the seventh day God said He 'ceased from His work'. He called the seventh day a Sabbath day (Gen. 2:3). Later, God gave His laws to Moses. In God's Law, the Sabbath was made a holy day (Ex. 20:8–11). On the Sabbath, men and women rested from work to worship their Creator. The Sabbath was the last or seventh day of the week. It started at sunset on Friday. Sadly, the Pharisees added their own rules for the Sabbath. They thought more about keeping their Sabbath rules than they did about obeying the Word of God.

The early Christians first met for worship on the Sabbath day. Later on, they met for worship on the first day of the week, Sunday. Sunday then became a day of rest and worship for most of the Christian Church because it was the day Jesus was resurrected. Some believers still keep Saturday as the Sabbath, like the Jews.



Mark 5:1–20 (Also in Luke 8:26–39)

JESUS BRINGS PEACE TO A PERSON'S HEART

Beside the sea, there were tombs, caves that people used for burying dead people. A wild man lived there (5:3). Evil spirits (demons) made him very strong and angry. The people tried to tie him with chains, but he broke them and ran off.

When the man saw Jesus get out of the boat, he ran up to Him and fell on his knees (5:6). The demons knew who Jesus was. 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?' The demons shouted, 'Swear to God that You won't hurt me!' (5:7). The demons knew who Jesus really was. The demons were afraid of Jesus. Evil spirits know that Jesus is the Son of God. They know that He has authority over them and they fear Him (James 2:19). They know that Jesus is the Lord of Creation. He can command the demons because all evil spirits must obey Him.

Mark shows us that Jesus has authority over all things. Jesus let the demons go into a herd of pigs. (Jews do not eat pigs.) Then the man saw the pigs run down into the lake and he knew that he was free. Free from all those demon spirits. He had faith in Jesus and he praised God. But the men who looked after the pigs ran too. They went back to town to tell the owners what had happened. When the people heard this story, they went out to see for themselves (5:14).

The man was in his right mind, sitting quietly at Jesus' feet! The people of the town were afraid. Before, they were afraid of the man with the demons. Now they were afraid of the power of God (5:17). They had lost their pigs, so they begged Jesus to go away.

GO HOME AND TELL YOUR FAMILY

The man stood beside Jesus on the shore. He had no friends, no food, no work and no place to live. 'Let me come with You,' he asked Jesus (5:19). Jesus told him, 'Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you ...' (5:19). For many years, Satan had robbed this man's family of a son or a husband and father. Now it was time to go back and tell his family what Jesus had done for him and to tell other people about Jesus. This man witnessed to people in the Ten Cities on the east side of the Lake of Galilee.



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TALK ABOUT THIS:

- What did Jesus mean by 'Those who have ears should listen' (Mark 4:9)?
- What did the prophet Isaiah say about hard hearts (4:12; Jeremiah 17:9)?
- What is 'good ground'?
- How can we help the 'seed' to grow in people's hearts?
- What do we learn about God in 4:14 and Satan in 4:15?
- What can we do to help people understand the truth of God (4:33)?

Who spreads the seed (v26)? Who makes it grow (vv27,28)? Who reaps the harvest (v29)? Are you involved in both sowing and reaping? Are you asking and trusting the Holy Spirit to do His part? How can you support the workers who sow seeds and reap harvests? What part can training, teaching and Bible literature play in extending the Kingdom of God? Are you praying for more harvest workers (Matthew 9:38)?



Mark 4:35–41 (Also in Luke 8:22–25)

THE DISCIPLES CROSS THE LAKE

Jesus told the disciples to take Him to the other side of the lake. While they were crossing the lake, a storm started and waves broke over their small boat. The disciples were afraid but Jesus was not afraid. He was asleep.

'Teacher, don't You care if we drown?' they cried out to Jesus (4:38). Jesus sat up. 'Quiet! Be still!' He said to the wind. Then the wind stopped and the lake became very calm. Normally it takes a long time for waves to become calm. The disciples had never seen anything like this happen before.

They looked at each other and someone whispered: 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him' (4:41). They had been afraid of the storm and now they were afraid of Jesus. He was more than a man. He was God! Jesus wanted to know why they had not trusted in Him to protect them.

When our hearts are like the sea and they cannot rest, Jesus says the same thing to us: 'Be still! I am with you. Trust in Me.'



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Note verse 28: When Jesus spoke about the Son of Man, He meant Himself. Jesus is Lord of all.



Mark 3:7–19

JESUS CHOOSES TWELVE MEN

Jesus went to a house near the lake. Great numbers of people came from all around to hear Him. The people were pushing and crushing Jesus, so He stood in a boat on the lake and taught them. A voice can be heard a long way across water. Later, He went to the hills.

Jesus healed many people in this region (3:10). He stopped the evil spirits from shouting out that He was the Son of God (3:12). He did not want the unclean spirits to honour Him. He wanted the people to confess their sins, and to say that they needed to be put right with God. He wanted people to believe in Him and to come to him in love. He did not want the evil spirits, who believed in Him, to shout out in fear. This would cause trouble, make it difficult to teach and cut short the time before His arrest. Satan will try to do anything to hinder the growth of the Kingdom of God.

In the morning, He called His followers and chose twelve special disciples (3:14):

- to have them with Him
- to teach them
- to send them out to preach
- to give them His power to heal people and to drive out demons (3:15).

The list of names includes Judas. This man would later betray Jesus as part of God's plan. (See John 6:70-71.) For three years, Jesus taught the twelve disciples to be messengers of God. This is why He called them 'apostles'. He trained them to tell the Good News of God that Salvation is through Jesus Christ. (Learn more about the apostles in our Bible commentaries on Acts.)



JESUS' TWELVE DISCIPLES (Mark 3:13–19)

Simon from Bethsaida, a fisherman. Jesus gave him the name **Peter** or **Cephas** (a rock).

James, son of Zebedee, called '**James the elder**' and **John**, his brother

Andrew, Peter's brother (John 1:40).

Philip, who went and found

Nathanael, also called **Bartholomew** (John 1:43).

Thomas (John 11:16; 14:5). **James**, son of Alphaeus, or '**James the younger**' (Mark 15:40).

Matthew, the publican or tax collector also called **Levi** (Matthew 10:2).

Thaddaeus, also called **Judas**.

Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:15)

Judas Iscariot who later betrayed Jesus.



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. Is it wrong to pick grain on the Sabbath?
2. Why did people fast?
3. What kind of things should we do on the Sabbath?
4. What did Jesus mean when He said, 'The Sabbath day was made for man' (2:27)?
5. What was the difference between the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of the religious leaders?
6. How can we become disciples of Jesus?



What truths can we learn about Jesus in 2:19, 20, 28; 3:4, 8, 14?



Mark 3:20–35 (Also in Luke 11:14–23)

GOD'S POWER OVER SATAN

Jesus had been driving demons out of people (1:39), and the Pharisees talked about it. 'He is driving out demons', they said 'by the power of the chief of demons (Satan)' (3:22).

Jesus asked them, 'How can Satan drive out Satan?' This did not make sense and Jesus used three pictures to show this:

- a) a kingdom of people who are fighting with each other;
- b) a house or family of people who are fighting each other;
- c) Satan fighting against himself.

There are two spirit kingdoms in this world: God's Kingdom of love and light, and Satan's kingdom of darkness and evil. Satan's demons hate the truth and they attack God's servants. This is why Jesus taught His followers to pray: 'Save us from the evil one' (Matthew 6:13).

In God's Kingdom evil is defeated and sins are forgiven (3:28). But no one can be forgiven if they speak evil against God's Holy Spirit (3:29). He said this because the Jewish teachers were speaking against the Spirit of Christ (3:30).

Satan is 'the strong man' in the parable of Jesus (3:27). He binds (ties up) people in their sins. But Jesus is stronger than Satan. Jesus came to bind the strong man and to free his prisoners. Jesus also drives out demons. Jesus came and died to free people from their sins (Galatians 3:22). And He came to free people bound by Satan and by man-made religious laws (Galatians 3:23).

JESUS AND HIS MOTHER AND BROTHERS

It may surprise us to read that Jesus did not want to see His mother and brothers. But it is clear from an earlier verse (3:21) that they had come to take Him away. They were embarrassed by Him. They were worried about the things people were saying about Him. They thought that Jesus was mad. He did not want to argue with them.

Jesus warned the people that if they did not understand this parable, then they would not understand the others (Mark 4:13). This is what Isaiah warned in the holy writing (4:12; Isaiah 6:9,10). But for those people who hear and understand these things, they will live fruitful lives in God's Kingdom (4:20). This parable shows the difference between people who are saved and people who are lost. It shows what happens to people who do not listen carefully to God's truth. But many people will not understand these things. But do not be discouraged for there will be a good harvest among those who receive the Word of God (4:20).



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Jesus is like a lamp. He must be 'lifted up' so that all people will see the light of God's truth (4:22; John 1:4,5). Give to others what you have received. The light of God's truth will bless others and you will receive more (4:24).

PARABLES ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus' disciples did not understand what He was saying about God's Kingdom. So Jesus used a common example from their lives. A man who plants seed is like the evangelist who preaches the word of God (4:26). He believes that the seed will grow by itself (4:27, 28). He believes that it will make many more seeds for the harvest. The growing seed is the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the people who have opened their hearts to the message of the truth of God.

The farmer cannot produce the harvest. He must wait in faith and be ready with his workers to collect the harvest and care for it and protect it from animals, birds, insects, weeds and weather.

Jesus told another parable about the Kingdom of God. It was like a tiny mustard seed planted in a garden. In less than a year it would become larger than all the other plants.

God's Kingdom on earth began as a very small thing. Jesus' followers were not important people. They were ordinary men without power. Yet during their lifetime, the Kingdom spread over all the known world (Acts 1:8; 4:33).

Today, the truth is preached everywhere. Men and women either reject God's truth or believe it and become the disciples of Jesus. The Holy Spirit produces a crop: God's people reap the harvest. But Jesus warned that there are few harvest workers (Matthew 9:37).

3. The seed that the farmer sows among thorns speaks about a life that is full of other things. Three enemies of the soul are given here. These destroy the new, tender shoots of faith (Matthew 19:22):
 - a) seeking after too many things of this world
 - b) the love of money
 - c) the search for pleasure and success (1 John 2:16).
4. The seed that is sown on good soil is like the truth received by an open heart. The soil is good and deep and well prepared for the seed. It grows and produces a crop. The crop is a new life of true faith in God and the many good works that follow it.

We sow the seed when we tell other people about God's truth or when we give them a Bible to read. Some people will not listen. Some people will listen and not understand. Some will be quick to follow Jesus but will be easily discouraged – they will easily give up because of their weak faith. Some will gladly follow the 'new way' of Jesus, then lose their way because they want to try other new things and ideas as well.



PARABLES

- Jesus used parables to teach truth to His followers. A parable is a simple story of everyday events but it has a deeper, spiritual meaning.
- He often explained the parable later to the twelve disciples (4:13).
- There were people in the crowd who did not want to know the truth. They did not listen or understand (4:12, 24–25).
- People who wanted to know God's truth tried to understand the meaning of the stories.
- The Holy Spirit reveals more and more truth to a heart that wants to understand God (Matt 13:14–15).
- People who listen to God's truth (4:9) will learn more and it will change them.

The value of teaching in parables

Here is good advice for all who teach the truth of God and preach His Good News about Jesus Christ our Saviour.

1. Keep your message simple
2. Tell stories that describe life in the Kingdom of God.
3. Use stories from your own culture, age and experience.
4. Ask the Holy Spirit to tell you what to say.
5. Describe the stories with drama and enthusiasm.
6. Exaggerate each story as Jesus did (4:8,21,28,32) so that listeners smile.
7. Then remember to apply the story clearly to a truth of God (4:14–20,26,30).
8. Explain how the story helps to understand the truth (4:33).
9. Seek out those who want to know more (4:34).

So, by not going out to see His family, Jesus made sure that they would not obstruct the will of God. He shows compassion for them because He does not want them to go against God's will. He wanted to stay with the people who were fulfilling God's plan for Him – the crowds who wanted Him to teach them and to heal them. He said that they were His mother and brothers and sisters. 'Anyone who obeys God is My brother, My sister and My mother' (3:35).

It does not say that Jesus actually turned away from His own mother and brothers. If He stepped outside to see them, however, He would have to warn them that they were disobeying God's will and purpose by trying to take Him away. He did not want to argue with them. So He chose to stay with those who were doing God's will. He did the kindest thing and the correct thing towards His family.



Family

Family means different things in different cultures. In the West, family means the children and grandchildren born to a man and his wife. In Africa and many other countries, family includes parents, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, cousins and even close friends of family members. The Christian family however includes even more people. It includes those who believe in God and desire to live as He intended through the new life in Christ. The family that Jesus refers to in 3:34 are those who are born again into this new life. As with every family, there is a strong community life where each member supports the other. Therefore, in every Christian fellowship we should find much caring, unity, hospitality and readiness to serve each other with joy. There should be respect for the older members of the family but also encouragement for the gifts of the younger members. Also, the truth and wisdom of God must be taught to the children of each new generation.

The benefits of the Christian family should be shared with the fellowship including those from other cultures. Christians of all nations are equal brothers and sisters in the Christian family. By meeting, greeting and sharing with other Christians, we show the world how to live at peace with each other as God intended. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit so that believers would have the guidance and power to do this. If Christians listen to and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit saying 'This is the way; walk in it' (Isaiah 30:21) then we will have unity with other believers in serving. We will throw away our old ways and traditions which obstruct true faith and worship and service (Isaiah 30:32). Then God can bring prosperity (30:33).

Jesus said, 'I have other sheep who do not belong to this sheep pen. I must bring them in, too. They will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd' (John 10:16). The family of God in love and unity will bring peace and prosperity to a nation and its many cultures. Freedom to serve others in love is a sign of the Christian family. No one should make personal gain from what others are free to do in love.

Sometimes, the family members closest to us can make it hard for us to do what God wants us to do. We must understand their loving concern. But we must understand what is the will of God and let Him deal with every situation without us having big troubles when we make family decisions.

Satan used the love and fears of family members to try to obstruct the ministry of Jesus. Perhaps family members will discourage us. Do not feel anger, only compassion. Some family members may have good connections in society, but it is more important to be connected with the family of God and with the poor and needy.



TALK ABOUT THIS:

1. How did Jesus show love for His own mother and family?
2. How do we show to others that we are part of the worldwide family of God (3:34,35)?
3. What truths of God do we learn from 3:28,29,35?



What is the value of small meetings and large meetings for teaching (3:7)? How do you train disciples (3:14,15)?



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Based on Mark chapters 1 to 3

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c.

Answers are given at the end

1. Long ago the prophets wrote about a messenger from God. He was —
 - a) Jesus.
 - b) John the Baptizer.
 - c) Peter.
2. Who said, 'You are My own dear Son'?
 - a) God to Jesus.
 - b) John to Jesus.
 - c) Jesus to John.
3. Jesus taught the people —
 - a) in the same way as the scribes did.
 - b) using children's stories.
 - c) using stories with a hidden meaning.

4. Why did the four men make a hole in the roof?
 - a) to get a sick man to Jesus.
 - b) to watch the crowd.
 - c) to spy on Jesus.
5. Jesus ate with the tax collectors and sinners because —
 - a) He wanted to make the Pharisees angry.
 - b) He was hungry.
 - c) He wanted to show that God cared for them.
6. Many Pharisees followed Jesus —
 - a) so that they could learn how to heal people.
 - b) so that they could find something wrong about Him.
 - c) because He taught well.
7. Jesus chose His disciple —
 - a) by calling workmen to follow Him.
 - b) by choosing religious leaders.
 - c) by accepting anyone who asked.



Now read Mark 4:1–34 (Also in Luke 8:4–15)

THE PARABLE OF THE FARMER AND THE SEED

Jesus got into a boat and taught the people. On calm days, people could easily hear the voice of someone a long way across water.

In this parable, the farmer who sows seed is like someone who tells the gospel. The seed is like the truth of God's message – the Good News. The one who tells it, 'sows' it in the world. He is a sower or a witness. A witness is someone who shares what he knows or what he has seen.

The farmer carried his seed in a bag. He threw the seed as far as he could (4:4). Jesus' words were like the seed. Hearts that were open would receive the truth like good soil receives seed. Hearts that were hard would not receive the truth.

Later, Jesus explained the parable to His disciples:

1. Some hearts are hard like the path. They cannot take in the Good News of Jesus Christ. The ground is hard and there is nothing for the seed to grow in.
2. Rocky places mean hearts that are quick to receive God's message but easily give up when trouble comes. The seed grows quickly in the shelter between the rocks. But there is very little soil for the seed to grow in. When the sun is hot, the plants dry up and die. Satan comes and takes away the message that was planted in them (4:15).