

Mark's Gospel: Daily Reading Notes

Mark possibly wrote this Gospel with the help of Peter in Rome, towards the end of Peter's life. It has been suggested that the young man who ran off naked when Jesus was arrested (Mark 14.51-52) was Mark himself. The book continually challenges its readers with two central questions: Who is Jesus? And what is the Good News about Him? If Mark really was referring to himself in chapter 14, he changed from being very fearful, to one who tried to help Paul as a missionary but let him down (Acts 13.13) and finally to someone who proved really valuable when given a second chance (2 Timothy 3.11). Understanding fully who Jesus is, is key to our Christian life.

We are aiming to read through Mark's Gospel over the next three months. There is a section for each day. Most days it is quite short and the hope is that we will be able to read it more than once, mulling it over, maybe thinking about it later in the day, seeking to hear what God is saying to us through it. The sections for the Church Bible Study days are slightly longer. These are an opportunity to come and talk about everything together. Come if you can but don't worry if you can't. These notes are here to help you read the Bible for yourself.

Day 1 (Tuesday 4th September) Read Mark Chapter 1 verses 1 to 15

The Proclamation of John the Baptist, the Baptism, Temptation and Beginning of Galilean Ministry of Jesus.

8 centuries before Christ's birth, the prophet Isaiah foretold that God would send a messenger (John the Baptist) to prepare people. You might want to read Isaiah chapter 40 verse 3

Questions to think about

1. What was John's message? (verses 3 & 4)
2. What can we receive from Jesus? (Verse 8)
3. What do we find out about who Jesus is? (verse 11)

Read the passage again and reflect on it. Is God speaking to you through a particular verse?

A Prayer you may want to say

God, Our Heavenly Father, open our hearts to understand more and more just who Jesus really is. We are sorry for the wrong we have done. Forgive us. Work in our lives now through your Holy Spirit. Amen

Day 2 (Wednesday 5th September) Read Mark Chapter 1 verses 16 to 20

Jesus Calls the First Disciples.

At the start of Christ's ministry, He went alongside ordinary people and called them to follow Him. He met them where they were and transformed them into people who would do amazing things. (It is clear from the other gospels that the disciples were not meeting Jesus for the first time here.)

Questions to think about

1. Why do you think the disciples responded the way they did?
2. In what ways might we too "fish for people"?
3. Can you think of a time when God has clearly spoken to you about something?

Re-read the passage, imagining yourself there as one of the people mending the nets. What might you have been thinking as Jesus spoke?

A Prayer you may want to say.

Lord, open our ears so that we may hear you speaking to us when we read the Bible. Please grant that we might both hear and respond. Amen

Day 3 (Thursday 6th September) Read Mark Chapter 1 verses 21 to 28

The Man with an Unclean Spirit

Capernaum was Peter's home town and Christ's visit obviously made a big impact. It is less fashionable today to think about evil spirits/forces of evil, though we see much that is evil in the world. Right at the start of Mark's Gospel, Jesus shows his authority, to teach people and to overcome the forces of evil.

Questions to think about.

1. Who did the unclean spirit know Jesus to be? (verse 24)
2. Why might Jesus have commanded them to be silent?
3. What is it about certain people that gives them authority in our minds today?

A prayer you may want to say.

Holy One of God, use your word in the Bible to teach us. Thank you that you are in ultimate authority on this earth and all things are under your control. Amen

Day 4 (Friday 7th September)

Read Mark Chapter 1 verses 29 to 34

Jesus Heals Many at Simon's House

Simon was later given the name Peter (Mark 3.16). Jesus came and stayed for some time in his family house. Peter's mother in law was healed so dramatically of her fever that she got up and immediately carried on as if nothing had happened. Sunset on the Sabbath (synagogue day) would be the earliest sick people could be moved under the Law.

Questions to think about.

1. What part did other people play in the first healing? (verse 30)
2. What made 'the whole city' come to Peter's door?
3. Who would you want to bring to Jesus in prayer now?

A prayer you may want to say.

Lord Jesus you cured many who were sick with various diseases. Please bring healing to those we have on our hearts now. Amen

Day 5 (Saturday 8th September)

Read Mark Chapter 1 verses 35 to 39

A preaching Tour in Galilee

Simon (Peter) got up in the morning to find that Jesus was gone. Jesus, who had 'the whole city' coming to Him in Capernaum, had left before dawn. The disciples searched Him out and found he had been praying and was now going out to neighbouring towns.

Questions to think about.

1. What could be the advantages of praying early in the morning and in a 'deserted place'?
2. For whom was Christ's message?
3. The people in Capernaum had obviously been very pleased to have Jesus with them. What might you expect them to do now he had left?

A prayer you may want to say.

Loving God, thank you for the teaching we have had about you. Thank you for all the things you have done in our lives. Please help us as we live for you now. Amen

Day 6 (Sunday 9th September)

Read Mark Chapter 1 verses 40 to 45

Jesus Cleanses a Leper

The disease mentioned in the Bible appears to include a range of skin conditions other than what we now understand as leprosy. The Bible always talks of this leprosy being 'cleansed' rather than 'healed' and it could be seen as a picture of the sin that now mars mankind. Lepers had to live away from others because of the fear of contagion.

Questions to think about.

1. How did Jesus feel towards this out cast? (verse 41)
2. The leper came to Jesus, against the rules. What does that say about how the leper felt?
3. If leprosy is an appropriate picture for sin, what does that tell us about sin?

Try reading the passage again but imagining yourself as the leper.

A prayer you may want to say.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for cleansing us from all our sin. Help us to see the ugliness of sin. Forgive us and cleanse us. Amen.

Day 7 (Monday 10th September)

Read Mark Chapter 2 verses 1 to 12

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

Jesus returns to Capernaum and four people bring to him a fifth who is unable to move. The man is paralysed. They are so desperate to get him through the crowd to Jesus that they tear through the roof. Christ's response turns certain people against Him but for us his words contain wonderful news: Christ has authority to forgive us our sins.

Questions to think about.

1. What did Jesus see as the greatest need of the helpless man? (verse 5)
2. The scribes said "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" They were right. What was it that they could not see?
3. What did Jesus have to do in order for our sins to be forgiven?

Take a few moments to let the words "your sins are forgiven" (verse 5) sink in.

A prayer you may want to say.

Lord God, thank you for forgiving us for all our sin. Thank you that you went all the way to the cross in order for our sins to be forgiven. Help us, like the paralysed man, to walk now in new life with you. Help us to glorify you in all that we do. Amen.