



FOLLOW ME

THE GOSPEL OF MARK

SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE

1 HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Let's get practical.

How do you use this guide? Below are some features to each week's reading you'll like to pay attention to. We'll briefly unpack each of these.

The Main Reading

This is the passage of Scripture for the week. It will also be the passage or passages you hear preached from the stage. If you use this in a small group, this reading will be the focus of your discussion in your small group time.

Scripture Memory

This is a passage from the main reading for you to commit to memory. Don't snub this off as something only children do. Scripture memory is a powerful tool to reorient and retrain your mind to think God's thoughts after Him.

Sermon Notes

This is a section for you to take some brief notes on the Sermon before you meet with your small group. You may want to bring this guide to Sunday morning service or just simply jot down some things you remember from the message before you meet with your group. It's up to you.

Discussion Questions

These are the questions for you to work through before you meet with your group and then discuss when your group meets.

2 THE R.I.S.E. ACRONYM

Throughout this sermon series, you're going to notice we circle back to the R.I.S.E. Acronym quite frequently.

These four letters each represent an element in a dynamic discipleship process that mutually reinforce each other. Each week, you'll notice your discussion questions will have a specific question aimed at helping you apply an aspect of this acronym to your life. For reference sake, here is a breakdown of the acronym for you to refer back to:

Relationships: specifically, intentional relationships. These are contrasted with casual relationships.

Instruction: specifically, biblical instruction. This is contrasted with the stories of our culture.

Spiritual Practices: like scripture reading, prayer, fasting, solitude, etc. These are contrasted with our life habits.

Experiences: specifically, hands-on ministry experiences. These are contrasted with our everyday environments.

Conclusion

As you begin reading, ask God to open your eyes to see wonderful things in His word (Psalm 119:18). Ask Him to show you His glory (2 Corinthians 4:4–6) and bind your heart to His Word (Proverbs 6:21). The goal is not just knowledge, but obedience—obedience that is informed by a genuine love for Jesus and desire to help others follow Him as well.

As you work through this guide, we encourage you to think honestly and practical about what it could look like for you to grow in your discipleship to Jesus and to help others do the same.

3 THE BOOK OF MARK

Author: John-Mark | Date: mid-late 50s

Church tradition holds that the Gospel of Mark was written by John-Mark, a close companion of the apostle Peter (1 Peter 5:13) and a recurring character in the book of Acts (see Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37–39).

Unlike the Epistles (i.e. Romans, Colossians, 1 Peter), the Gospels do not name their authors in the opening verses. Instead, they come with general headings that indicate their authorship (i.e. The Gospel of Mark, Matthew, etc.) The early church fathers unanimously affirmed that Mark wrote his gospel, even noting that Mark's Gospel is the personal record of the apostle Peter's eyewitness experience of Jesus. Consider the following quotations from early Church History:¹

- Papias of Hieropolis (60AD–130AD): “Mark became Peter’s interpreter and wrote accurately all that he remembered, not, indeed, in order, of the things said and done by the Lord.”
- Irenaeus: (130–200AD): “Peter and Paul proclaimed the gospel in Rome and founded the community. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, handed on his preaching to us in written form.”
- Clement of Alexandria (150–210AD): “And so great a joy of light shone upon the minds of the hearers of Peter that they were not satisfied with merely a single hearing or with the unwritten teaching of the divine gospel, but with all sorts of entreaties they besought Mark, who was a follower of Peter...to leave behind with them in writing a record of the teaching passed on to them orally...”

Evangelical scholars have suggested dates for the writing of Mark's Gospel that range from 50–70AD. However, as John MacArthur notes, “A date before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70 is required by the comment of Jesus in 13:2.”² Moreover, there is almost universal agreement in New Testament scholarship that Mark's Gospel was written first. At present, conservative estimates place the dating of the Gospels as follows:

- Mark: mid-late 50s • Matthew: 50–60 A.D. • Luke: 58–60 A.D. • John: mid-late 80s or early 90s.³

As previously noted, these are more conservative estimates that are not unanimously agreed upon. More skeptical scholars like Bart Ehrman date the Gospels a bit later:

- Mark: AD 70 • Matthew and Luke: AD 80–85 • John: AD 90–95.⁴

THE BOOK OF MARK

Author: John-Mark | Date: mid-late 50s

For the average person each pair of dates could be troubling. If Jesus ministered around the year AD 30, then why did it take decades before the stories of His life were written down? Couldn't legendary developments have crept in over this time? These are good questions, but to look at either one of these collections of dates and conclude that the documents aren't reliable would be a mistake.

In reality, either of the pairs of dates listed above would count as early testimony—historically speaking. J.P. Moreland, a philosopher and writer on the historical Jesus, has noted:

*“Even if these [later] dates for the Gospels are accepted, the Gospels were still written during the time when eyewitnesses who had seen Jesus and had experienced his ministry were alive. One would, therefore, still be on good historical grounds for treating them as solid historical sources”.*⁵

We are, however, by no means obligated to the later dates. Even Bart Ehrman says these later dates are a “rough estimate.”⁶ Moreover, as Moreland points out, even these later dates wouldn't have been a problem—both of these dates are still within the timeframe for the original eyewitnesses and their disciples to be alive.

But another reason we can trust the early dating and reliability of the Gospel accounts is because of the strong presence of oral (spoken) tradition that existed in the first century. The Jewish people had a remarkable ability to memorize and pass along information that was meaningful to them without corrupting the original message.

New Testament scholar, Mark Strauss observes that, “Ancient people tended to have better memories than we have today, and the oral tradition was considered to be as high as, and sometimes higher than written sources.”⁷ In no culture was this truer than ancient Israel. Resurrection scholar, William Lane Craig points out:

*“In an oral culture like that of the first century, Israel, the ability to memorize and retain large tracts of oral tradition was a highly prized and highly developed skill. From the earliest age children in the home, elementary school, and the synagogue were taught to memorize faithfully sacred tradition”.*⁸

When we come to the Gospel of Mark, therefore, it's important to realize we are reading the reliable testimony of those who actually lived and walked with Jesus (specifically, the apostle Peter). This testimony was written down, preserved to the present day, and now sits in our Bibles waiting to be read.⁹

FOOTNOTES

¹Each of these quotations and more can be found online from J. Warner Wallace, “Is Mark's Gospel an Early Memoir of the Apostle Peter?” Cold Case Christianity Website, July 25, 2018, www.coldcasechristianity.com.

²John MacArthur, *The John MacArthur Whole Bible Commentary*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1189.

³These dates come from Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2009), 229, 179, 256, 290.

⁴Bart Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2014), 92.

⁵J.P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), 151.

⁶Bart Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 5th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 90

⁷Mark Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 55.

⁸William Lane Craig, *On Guard: Defending Your Faith with Reason and Precision* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010), 189.

⁹For more on the transmission of the Bible throughout history, see Timothy Paul Jones, *How We Got The Bible* (Peabody: Rose Publishing, 2015).

WEEK 1

Main Reading: Mark 1–2

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“Follow me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fish for people.” — Mark 1:17

SERMON REFLECTION

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. What is one action step you want to take after this week’s message?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 1–2, what are some things that really stood out to you? Why?

2. How do you see Jesus’ calling His disciples into Intentional Relationships in these chapters?

3. What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus’ instruction in your everyday life?

4. What is one action step you want to take in response to this week’s reading?

WEEK 2

Main Reading: Mark 3-4

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Choose one verse from these two chapters you will commit to memory this week.

SERMON REFLECTION

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. What is one action step you want to take after this week's message?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 3-4, what are some things that really stood out to you? Why?

2. How do you see Jesus' providing Biblical Instruction for His disciples in these chapters?

3. What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus' instruction in your everyday life?

4. What is one action step you want to take in response to this week's reading?

WEEK 3

Main Reading: Mark 5-6

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

“He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest for a while.’” — Mark 6:31

SERMON REFLECTION

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. What is one action step you want to take after this week’s message?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 5-6, what are some things that really stood out to you? Why?

2. How do you see Jesus’ providing Spiritual Practices in these chapters?

3. What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus’ instruction in your everyday life?

4. What is one action step you want to take in response to this week’s reading?

WEEK 4

Main Reading: Mark 7-8

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Choose one verse from these two chapters you will commit to memory this week.

SERMON REFLECTION

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. What is one action step you want to take after this week's message?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 7-8, what are some things that really stood out to you? Why?

2. How do you see Jesus' calling His disciples to hands-on ministry Experiences in these chapters?

3. What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus' instruction in your everyday life?

4. What is one action step you want to take in response to this week's reading?

WEEK 5

Main Reading: Mark 9-10

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Jesus called them over and said to them, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in high positions act as tyrants over them. 43 But it is not so among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first among you will be a slave to all. — Mark 10:42–44

SERMON REFLECTION

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. What is one action step you want to take after this week’s message?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 9-10, what are some things that really stood out to you? Why?

2. In these chapters, how do you see Jesus’ describing Intentional Relationships in His Kingdom?

3. What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus’ instruction in your everyday life?

4. What is one action step you want to take in response to this week’s reading?

WEEK 6

Main Reading: Mark 11–12

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Choose one verse from these two chapters you will commit to memory this week.

SERMON REFLECTION

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. What is one action step you want to take after this week's message?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 11–12, what are some things that really stood out to you? Why?

2. How do you see Jesus' providing Biblical Instruction for His disciples in these chapters?

3. What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus' instruction in your everyday life?

4. What is one action step you want to take in response to this week's reading?

WEEK 7

Main Reading: Mark 13–14

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

And he said, “Abba, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.” — Mark 14:36

SERMON REFLECTION

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. What is one action step you want to take after this week’s message?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 13-14, what are some things that really stood out to you? Why?

2. How do you see Jesus’ proving and/or modeling Spiritual Practices in these chapters?

3. What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus’ instruction in your everyday life?

4. What is one action step you want to take in response to this week’s reading?

WEEK 8

Main Reading: Mark 15-16

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

Choose one verse from these two chapters you will commit to memory this week.

SERMON REFLECTION

1. What were some key points that stood out to you from the sermon on this section?

2. What is one action step you want to take after this week's message?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Mark 15-16, what are some things that really stood out to you? Why?

2. How do you see Jesus' providing unique Experiences for His Disciples in these chapters?

3. What are some of the practical challenges you face to obeying Jesus' instruction in your everyday life?

4. What is one action step you want to take in response to this week's reading?

