



The Book of Mark

1. Take the: ***The Emotionally Healthy Discipleship Personal Assessment*** (before reading Mark, we will take it again after.)
2. **Read** a chapter a day Starting with Monday December 30

Introduction to the Book of Mark: A Journey into Discipleship

The Gospel of Mark is like an action-packed highlight reel of Jesus' ministry, where every word and every step points us toward the heart of discipleship. It's not just a story we read; it's an invitation to step into the life Jesus is calling us to live. Mark's fast-paced narrative shows Jesus constantly on the move, teaching, healing, and transforming lives. It's not a Gospel that lets us sit still—it's one that compels us to move with Him.

What makes Mark especially powerful is how it reveals discipleship as a hands-on, real-life journey. It's messy, beautiful, challenging, and deeply rewarding. Mark shows us the highs and lows of what it means to follow Jesus, giving us not only insight but practical steps to take in our own lives.

Discipleship: The Call to Activation

1. An Invitation to Follow

Right from the start, Jesus extends a radical invitation: "Follow me." Ordinary fishermen drop everything to be with Him (Mark 1:16-20). That same call is for us today. The question is: What do we need to leave behind to fully embrace His call? Reading this, we're not just observers; we're participants. What's our first step?

2. Learning by Doing

In Mark, the disciples don't sit through lectures—they follow Jesus into the thick of life. They watch Him heal, preach, and confront injustice. Then, He sends them out to do the same (Mark 6:7-13). Discipleship isn't just about absorbing knowledge; it's about putting it into practice. As we read, let's ask ourselves: What has Jesus equipped us to do right now?

3. Failure and Grace

Mark doesn't sugarcoat the journey. The disciples often miss the point, doubt, or even abandon Jesus when things get tough (Mark 14:50). But failure isn't the end of the story—it's an opportunity for growth. Jesus never gives up on them, and He won't give up on us. How can we embrace His grace and keep moving forward in our walk with Him?

4. The Cost and the Reward

Jesus makes it clear: following Him means surrendering everything (Mark 8:34-38). It's not an easy road, but it's worth it. Discipleship transforms us and impacts the world around us. What is Jesus asking us to lay down, and how can we trust Him to lead us into something greater?



5. Living Sent

Mark's Gospel ends with Jesus commissioning His followers to "go into all the world" (Mark 16:15). The goal of discipleship is multiplication—not just becoming followers of Jesus, but making more disciples. As we finish the book, let's ask: Who in our lives needs to hear about Jesus, and how can we share Him boldly?

Activation: Moving from Reading to Living

Mark's Gospel is more than a historical account—it's a call to action. Each story, each moment with Jesus, is an opportunity to reflect and respond. What is the Holy Spirit highlighting as you read? How is He calling you to step into greater faith, deeper obedience, and a more active role in His mission?

This journey isn't just about us—it's about stepping out, living boldly, and inviting others to join the adventure of following Jesus. Let's not just read the Gospel of Mark; let's live it.

WHO AND WHY

The Gospel of Mark was likely written to early Christians, specifically Gentile believers, living in Rome or in areas under Roman influence. The cultural and historical context of these believers shapes both the style and purpose of the Gospel.

Who Was It Written To?

- **Gentile Audience:**

Mark's Gospel assumes little knowledge of Jewish customs or traditions. He often explains Jewish practices (Mark 7:3-4) and translates Aramaic phrases into Greek (Mark 5:41, Mark 7:34), which would have been unnecessary for a Jewish audience. This suggests his audience consisted of Gentile Christians unfamiliar with Jewish culture.

- **Persecuted Christians in Rome:**

Many scholars believe Mark was written during a time of intense persecution under Emperor Nero (AD 64-68). These believers were facing threats to their faith, their lives, and their community, and Mark's Gospel would have been a source of encouragement and strength in such a difficult time.

Why Was It Written?

- **To Present Jesus as the Suffering Servant:**

Mark emphasizes Jesus' humanity and His role as the Servant-King who suffers for the sake of humanity (Mark 10:45). For believers enduring persecution, this message would have been deeply comforting. It reminded them that Jesus, too, suffered unjustly and overcame.

- **To Encourage Perseverance:**

The Gospel focuses on the challenges of discipleship, including trials and the cost of following Jesus (Mark 8:34-38). For an audience under persecution, these themes reinforced the call to endure with faith, courage, and hope.



- **To Proclaim the Kingdom of God:**

Mark highlights Jesus' mission to bring the Kingdom of God to earth, showing His authority over sin, sickness, and even death. This would have reassured believers that, despite their suffering, God's Kingdom was advancing, and His victory was certain.

- **To Call Readers to Action:**

Mark's fast-paced, urgent style reflects a desire to inspire readers to respond immediately to Jesus' call. The word "immediately" (Greek: *euthys*) appears over 40 times, emphasizing the urgency of the Gospel message and the need for active discipleship.

Takeaway for Today

Mark was written to strengthen and mobilize believers in challenging times. It reminds us that Jesus not only understands our struggles but leads us through them with purpose and power. As we read this Gospel, we're invited to not only learn about Jesus but to follow Him with renewed courage and urgency, just as the first readers were.

WHO WAS MARK?

Mark, also known as **John Mark**, is a fascinating figure in the New Testament. Though he wasn't one of the twelve apostles, he played a significant role in the early Christian movement, contributing not only as a companion to key apostles but also as the author of the earliest written Gospel.

Who Was Mark?



- **A Close Associate of Peter:**

Mark is traditionally believed to have written his Gospel based on the teachings and firsthand accounts of the Apostle Peter. Early church fathers, such as Papias (around AD 120), affirmed that Mark acted as Peter's interpreter, recording his experiences and insights about Jesus. This connection gives Mark's Gospel an eyewitness perspective, even though Mark himself wasn't present for many of the events he describes.

- **A Member of a Prominent Christian Family:**

Mark's mother, Mary, owned a house in Jerusalem that served as a gathering place for early Christians (Acts 12:12). It's likely the same house where Peter went after his miraculous release from prison. Some traditions even suggest this could have been the location of the Last Supper.

- **A Companion of Paul and Barnabas:**

Mark was the cousin of Barnabas (Colossians 4:10) and accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 12:25; 13:5). However, Mark left them partway through the journey (Acts 13:13), a decision that caused tension between Paul and Barnabas. Despite this, Mark later reconciled with Paul and became a trusted co-laborer in the Gospel (2 Timothy 4:11; Philemon 1:24).



- **A Young Man During Jesus' Ministry:**

Some scholars speculate that Mark might have been the young man who fled naked when Jesus was arrested in Gethsemane (Mark 14:51-52). While this isn't certain, it could explain his personal interest in Jesus and his later dedication to spreading the Gospel.

Mark's Contribution to Christianity

Mark's greatest legacy is the Gospel that bears his name. Written around AD 60-70, it's widely regarded as the earliest Gospel and a source for Matthew and Luke. Mark's concise and vivid writing style captures the immediacy and urgency of Jesus' ministry, focusing on His role as the Servant-King and the cost of discipleship.

What We Learn from Mark's Life

Mark's journey reminds us that God can use imperfect people for His purposes. Despite his early failure on the missionary field, Mark matured into a faithful servant who made an indelible impact on the church. His story encourages us to persevere, reconcile when relationships are strained, and use our unique gifts to further God's kingdom. In Mark, we see the power of grace, restoration, and the value of a servant-hearted life.