



## THE GOSPEL OF MARK

What we have here for you is a Study Guide Light: a slimmer version of our weekly Study Guides that follow the sermon series. The purpose in writing this slimmer version is to make the content easily approached and digested.

Along the pathway of discipleship, the pastoral team strongly encourages you to live weeklong in the sermon passages by utilizing these questions in discussion, reflection, and prayer with at least one or two others: if you are in a Connection Group, then you need look no further; if not, consider discussing these questions with a family, a friend, or an accountability partner—or consider joining a Connection Group!

For those who have come to love the Study Guides in their longer format of questions *and* verse-by-verse commentary notes, be not dismayed: we will still provide that material on a weekly basis. But for now, here are studies along the lines of the first six sermons, to assist us as we continually seek—in the words of Connection Group vernacular—the ongoing transformation of ourselves, our congregation, and this city.

His grace and peace as you use this guide  
to grow ever closer to him,  
— Stuart Campbell



## Mark 1:1-13

*1 The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God,*

*2 as it is written in Isaiah the prophet:*

*"I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way"—*

*3 "a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him.'"*

*4 And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. 5 The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.*

*6 John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. 7 And this was his message: "After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."*

*9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove.*

*11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

*12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, 13 and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.*

## Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Study*: Read Isaiah 40:1-12, one of the key sources of the Old Testament quotation that begins the Gospel of Mark. In terms of “making straight in the desert a highway for our God,” what other important terms and imagery are given in that Isaiah passage that might help us understand John the Baptist’s language in Mark 1?
- 2) *Discern*: What might it look like for you to “make straight the paths of the Lord” in your local neighbourhood? In other words, how might you reveal the glory of the Lord in natural, organic ways to those around you?
- 3) *Discuss*: That Matthew speaks of “the whole Judean country” going out to meet John the Baptist implies, even if this is hyperbolic language, a considerable size group. If the narrative of Mark 1 were rewritten today, do you think a similar size group would respond in similar fashion? Why or why not? How do you characterize our modern society specifically with regards to repentance?
- 4) *Confess*: What might be, in this current season, the wilderness of your own life and Christian experience? In walking through that wilderness, are there any words of repentance that you might like to voice that his forgiveness might be experienced afresh?
- 5) *Reflect*: How does the Father’s pleasure in the Son speak, by the Spirit, words of good news to you this week, as you seek to live increasingly into your identity in Christ?
- 6) *Pray*: To whom might God be calling you to minister and serve this week, whether in the form of congregational care for one another, a shared coffee conversation, or help in running errands? Ask the Spirit to put a particular name and face upon your heart.

## Mark 1:14-20

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

16 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 17 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." 18 At once they left their nets and followed him.

19 When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. 20 Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Discuss*: What do you make of the fact that the fulfillment of time, with reference to God's kingdom drawing near, is expressed by Mark in terms of...an imprisonment?
- 2) *Reflect*: In what ways has God's call to repent been good news to you in your past experience, unleashing the grace of God anew upon your life?
- 3) *Pray*: Ask the Spirit to be fully working his ministry of repentance in your heart, in terms of repentance as a continual reorientation towards God's ongoing call for our lives—towards God's future for our lives, rather than towards our own created past.
- 4) *Study*: In last week's passage, we looked into Isaiah 40:1-12, referencing that chapter as the source of John the Baptist's prophetic Old Testament quotation. Continue reading Isaiah 40, focusing on verses 21-31. In light of these additional Isaiah verses, how does the call of Jesus upon our lives—to "follow him"—make a lot of sense?
- 5) *Discern*: How is God calling you, during this summer in particular, to get in the boat with him to become a fisher of women, men, and children? How is he calling you to live out, in other's lives, the truth that the kingdom of God has come near?
- 6) *Confess*: One of the key words of this passage is the little adverb "immediately" (εὐθύς, *euthus*), as in verses 18 and 20. Mark expresses the call of discipleship in terms of immediate implications and response. But, as we all know, responding immediately to the call of Christ in our lives is difficult. Confess where you have been prone to respond in hesitation to God's voice, and experience afresh his call to follow him and the Spirit's strength to do so.

21 They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. 23 Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, 24 "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" 25 "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" 26 The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. 27 The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him." 28 News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

29 As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. 30 Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. 31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. 32 That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. 33 The whole town gathered at the door, 34 and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. 36 Simon and his companions went to look for him, 37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" 38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." 39 So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

40 A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." 41 Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said. "Be clean!" 42 Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed. 43 Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: 44 "See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them." 45 Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Pray*: Ask that all the teaching that you receive through this series, whether from the pulpit, from these study guides, or from other discussion, would truly be teaching by the will of the Father, in the authority of the Son, through the life of the Spirit.
- 2) *Discuss*: What do you make of the fact that the “coming near of the kingdom of God” results in a clash of powers? What does this say about the ministry of Jesus?
- 3) *Reflect*: If we were to retell these verses, translating them through the centuries into our modern context, how might unclean spirits present themselves today? Into what areas of life is the Spirit speaking to you the authoritative words of Christ—be clean?
- 4) *Meditate*: What would it look like for you to have a healthy pattern of “withdrawing to an isolated place”—a place of rest and solitude—during the upcoming summer months? How might others keep you accountable to a healthy Sabbath practice?
- 5) *Encourage*: How does Jesus’s willingness to care for Simon’s mother-in-law, as well as for the leper—and this with a heart of pity/indignation—encourage you?
- 6) *Confess*: In refusing to merely follow the crowds pining to be with him, Jesus rejects the temptation to live for his own name—his own fame and power. How have you felt a similar temptation this week?

## Mark 2:1-12

*2 A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home.*

*2 They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them.*

*3 Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4 Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."*

*6 Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7 "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"*

*8 Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9 Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?"*

*10 But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, 11 "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home."*

*12 He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"*



## Discussion Questions:

1) *Discern*: What would it look like this week for you to live out the faith of the four mat-carrying friends within the family of FBC in terms of congregational care? What would it look like for you and your Connection Group to do so beyond the family of FBC in terms of neighbourhood missional presence?

2) *Discuss*: Of these verses the fourth-century Bishop of Constantinople Chrysostom writes, in his Homily 29.1: “The scribes asserted that God could forgive sins; yet Jesus not only forgave sins, but showed that he had also another power that belongs to God alone—the power to disclose the secrets of the heart.”

In terms of a revealed heart, how do you think the paralytic man felt with specific regards to Jesus’ declaration of sins forgiven?

3) *Meditate*: Is your own voice perhaps skeptically reasoning to yourself, “Why does Jesus speak this way with bold declarations of forgiveness and healing?” Surely we all have challenges in our Christian experience and in our lives in general that makes it easy to identify with the skeptical scribes in these verses. Search your heart, and ask for the Spirit’s revelation. How might you be questioning Christ’s words?

Share, if comfortable.

4) *Discern*: Are there ways that, like the crowd in this passage, we (as individuals, as Connection Groups, and as the FBC family at large) are blocking full access to the grace and forgiveness of God in the life of our church family?

5) *Praise*: How have you experienced God’s forgiveness and healing in the past in ways that have revealed the great glory of our God? Encourage one another.

6) *Pray*: Pray and ask that the Spirit would continue to work in our church family with such mighty acts of power, grace, and healing as seen in this passage.

## Mark 2:13-22

13 Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. 14 As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

15 While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. 16 When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

18 Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?" 19 Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. 20 But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast. 21 "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. 22 And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

## Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Discern*: Who are the “tax collectors and sinners” whom God has put in your life? What are the current practices in your life that you keep to remind you to “dine” with such folks?
- 2) *Confess*: How have you identified with the Pharisees this week, unaware of your own your own illness, be it emotional, spiritual, relational, etc.?  
Confess to one another, and receive anew the promise of his healing.
- 3) *Pray*: The church Father Augustine, in *Letter 145* on these verses, writes regarding being made healthy by the healing of Christ: “Pray for us that we may be made upright. This is indeed something which one cannot do unless he knows and wishes it; and he will become so as constantly as he wishes it fully—but not through his own effort, only as he is healed and helped by the grace of the Spirit.”  
May the Spirit make Augustine’s words our own words.
- 4) *Reflect*: The imagery of this passage, of Christ as bridegroom, implies communal joy in the presence of Jesus, and provides a picture of the “kingdom of God come near.” In this sense, how is the presence of Christ speaking good news of joy and celebration to you this week?
- 5) *Discuss*: How do you think Jesus is referring to his life and ministry as a “new” thing? (And how might this be related to Old Testament references to the “bridegroom”, as in Isaiah 62 and Jeremiah 33?)
- 6) *Discern*: What are the new things that God is doing in your neighbourhood? Do you have enough of a connection to your place of living/place of Connection Group gathering, to have a true sense of how God is moving in that place? If not, what might you do to develop such a sense?

## Mark 2:23-3:6

23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain.

24 The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? 26 In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." 27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

**3** Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. 2 Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. 3 Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, "Stand up in front of everyone."

4 Then Jesus asked them, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent.

5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. 6 Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1) *Study*: If you have not recently read the passage of David, on the run from the murderous Saul, in hunger, read 1 Samuel 21:1-6. Even as we notice significant details between what the Hebrew narrator tells us and what Jesus recounts, the question is still worthwhile: How does that passage inform our passage in Mark? Why do you suspect Jesus appeals to a story about David?
- 2) *Meditate*: How have Sabbath practices poured out the grace of God into your life in the past? What are the challenges to Sabbath-practicing with the schedule of your own life? Sit quietly over these questions for a few minutes, and share, if comfortable.
- 3) *Discuss*: For those of us who are retired, and for all of us who are living in fellowship and love with our retired brothers and sisters in our congregation, an important question must be asked: What does Sabbath resting look like for those who are retired? Regarding the other end of life's spectrum, we might also extend the question to children: What does Sabbath resting look like for the children we are raising?
- 4) *Confess*: The Message translation of verse 2 does well to bring out the sense of the Greek word παρατηρέω (*paratereo*), as in to watch maliciously for a person or to observe scrupulously (tradition): "The Pharisees had their eyes on Jesus to see if he would heal him, hoping to catch him in a Sabbath infraction." In what ways has your heart lately been tempted to judge others with malicious suspicion regarding their "holiness"?
- 5) *Reflect*: How does Jesus's example of doing good by caring for one's neighbour and by caring for those in need, challenge you this week, particularly in light of traditions and regulations that you might consider important?
- 6) *Discern*: How are you proclaiming to your neighbourhood the good news that the kingdom of God "has come near" in the form of restoration and healing? How are you going forth and doing so with others in the FBC family? Towards this end, is it time to consider Connection-Group fellowship?

Notes



## ΚΑΤΑ ΜΑΡΚΟΝ 1:3

Ἐτοιμάσατε τὴν ὁδὸν κυρίου,

εὐθείας ποιεῖτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ.



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

More to Come...

Prepare the way of the Lord,

make straight his paths.

Mark 1:3