

BIBLE / **THE GOSPEL OF MARK**
STUDY
SPRING 2021

“Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”



Session 1

Study overview

Here is the schedule for the spring semester. Please complete each session's reading prior to attending your small group. (Note: There is no homework for session 1.)

Session 1	Overview Mark 8:27-9:29
Session 2	Mark 9:30-10:52
Session 3	Mark 11:1-12:44
Session 4	Mark 13:1-37
Session 5	Mark 14:1-15:20
Session 6	Mark 15:21-16:8

Bible study format

We have three components to our Bible study: personal study, small group discussion, and large group teaching (in that order). We believe that participants will get the most out of the Bible study by spending time with the Lord and studying the text on their own first. When small groups meet, the discussion will be based on their time spent in God's Word that week. Lastly, the large group teaching serves to deepen the participants' understanding and application of the Bible.

Before group	Personal study
7:00-7:30pm	Small group discussion
7:30-8:00pm	Large group teaching
8:00-8:30pm	Small group discussion

How to use this workbook

This workbook contains passage commentary, study questions, and scripture pages for each session. You will work through the text and questions before coming to small group. Consider this workbook a guide as you journey through the gospel of Mark. Our hope is that each component of this study encourages you to think carefully and deeply about the Word of God.

1. **Read** the text
2. **Make notes** on the text
3. **Answer study questions** about the text
4. **Apply truths** from the text

Read the text: Repetitive reading

Developing the simple habit of reading a passage multiple times will help you to retain the content, see things you missed the first time, and gain clarity as you seek to understand the text. Do not overlook this simple but valuable Bible study skill.

Tip: It may be helpful for you to read the study questions in between your repeated readings of the text to train your eye to be on the lookout for those things.

Make notes on the text: Comprehension

What does the text say?

You have printed scripture pages included this workbook. We encourage you to use these pages with highlighters and/or colored pencils to help you to visually see the elements of context, theme, and purpose throughout the study.



You can annotate, or mark up, your text however suits you best - but we have given suggestions that will help you throughout each session if you choose to follow them. These will be consistent throughout the study so you can see the themes develop over the course of the book.

Why are there separate pages for annotation? The printed scripture pages allow more space and flexibility for you to make notes as you read. This also encourages you to write freely without fear of making a mistake or "cluttering" up the margins of your Bible. You can reprint a page or add blank pages to suit your study needs. After reading the text and making your own initial observations, answer the questions provided in the workbook.

These annotations will help you with the comprehension of the text. As you read and make notes, always ask the question, "What does this say?"

You will remember 10% of what you read, 20% of what you hear, and 30% by watching it modeled. Additionally, you'll remember 50% when you hear it and watch it modeled, 70% when you hear, watch it modeled and write out what you've learned. Finally, you remember 90% when you do all in addition to application or practice.

Tip: As you read the second time, make note of any initial observations - things that stick out to you, questions you have, anything that's repeated or seems significant to the understanding of the text.

Answer study questions about the text: Interpretation

What does the text mean?

The study questions will build upon your own personal observation work and help provide an accurate interpretation of the text. Instead of asking the question, "What does it say?", we now shift

to asking, "What does it mean?" If you come across a section and you don't know what it means yet, feel free to come back to it later. It's okay to not have an immediate answer. You can go back to your Context/Theme/Purpose pages to give you a sense of the "big picture" as you work through the questions.

Reflect and respond: Application

How should this change me?

To conclude each session's study, you will work through some application questions. You'll reflect on what you've read: 1) what do we learn about God in this passage and 2) what do we learn about people in this passage? Then you'll write down ways you'll respond to these truths. Our desires, behaviors, motivations, and day to day living should be transformed by God's Word.

Finding time for Bible study

If creating a rhythm of Bible study is new for you, then here is one way you can structure your time. We recommend about 60-90 minutes of study time each week. If you want a daily reading plan, read through the entire text multiple times throughout the week instead of reading a few verses each day. Reading and studying in context is key!

M	T	W	T	F
		Session 1 Small Group		Session 2 Read entire text (15 minutes)
Session 2 Read & annotate (15-30 minutes)		Session 2 Workbook (15-30 minutes)		Session 2 Workbook (15 minutes)
Session 2 Reflect and Respond (15-30 minutes)	<i>(Make up/ additional study time)</i>	Session 2 Small Group		

Tip: Talk to others in your small group about how they are planning on doing the study. It helps to have accountability within your group.

Using the Right Tools

Context | Theme | Purpose

Using the right tools will help you as you seek to understand and rightly interpret the text. As you study each passage, we encourage you to keep in mind the overall context, theme and purpose of the book.

Context *Who/when/where?*

Make note of setting elements, like people, places, and events, to help establish context. Keep an eye out for allusions to Old Testament passages to help with historical context.

Questions to help you with context:

Who wrote this book?
Who is the original audience?
Who is mentioned in the opening passage? Who is mentioned throughout the text?
When does this take place in the storyline of the Bible?
Where else is this verse mentioned?

Why is context important? It shapes your understanding of the text.

Theme *What?*

Make note of repeated key words or concepts that point to the main theme(s) of the book.

Questions to help you with theme:

What is the main point of this passage?
What key words point to the main theme of the passage or book?

Why is theme important? Biblical themes helps you to see the "big picture" of the book, and of the Bible, as you study verse by verse.

Purpose *Why? How?*

Look at the context and theme to help determine the author's purpose in writing the particular section of text.

Questions to help you with the author's purpose:

Why did the author write this passage?
How does the overall context and theme help you to identify why the author wrote this?

Why is the author's purpose important? Keeping their purpose in mind will help you as you navigate difficult or confusing passages. It will also guard your own personal application without losing sight of the original intent.

Recommended reading: Dig Deeper by Andrew Sach and Nigel Beynon

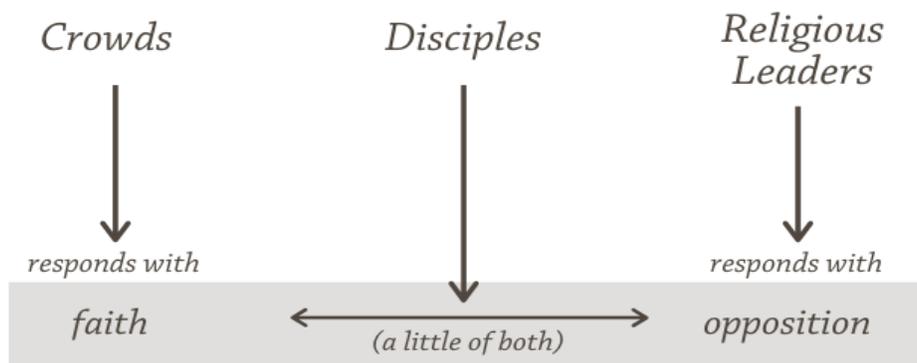
Setting the Stage

for studying Mark

Mark's gospel can be divided into two halves. The emphasis on the first is on Jesus' authority, and it culminates in Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ (or "Messiah") (8:29). The second half begins immediately after this confession. Shifting to a more somber tone, Mark explains what kind of Messiah Jesus is - one who suffers and dies on behalf of others. This second half culminates in another confession, this time by a Roman centurion who watched Jesus die on the cross (15:29).

Context

- Mark wrote this gospel account to Gentile Christians by recording the eyewitness account of the apostle Peter. Early church tradition places Mark in Rome where there was significant persecution of Christians.
- Three groups in Mark



Themes

- Identity of Christ
 1. He is the Son of God
 2. He is the Suffering Servant
- A call to discipleship
 1. Reflecting Christ's servanthood
 2. Enduring trials and suffering

Purpose

- Mark wrote to Gentile Christians to remind them of who Jesus is and what it looks like to follow him.



Bible Study Exercise

This exercise will allow us to practice using the study tools that we will be utilizing for the rest of the study. Read Mark 8:27-38, making note of references to Jesus' identity and what it means to follow him. Then look over the following questions to discuss in your group.

1. What name does Jesus use to refer to himself in this section? How many times does he use it is the name used in this section?
2. This phrase was intentionally chosen by Jesus as it also comes up in other passages. However, depending on the context, it may have a different meaning. Which of these following passages best help us to understand why Jesus uses this name for himself?

Balaam speaking the oracle that God gave him in Numbers 23:19:

*God is not man, that he should lie,
or a son of man, that he should change his mind.
Has he said, and will he not do it?
Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

God speaking to Isaiah in Isaiah 51:12:

*"I, I am he who comforts you;
who are you that you are afraid of man who dies,
of the son of man who is made like grass"*

Daniel describing a vision he received in Daniel 7:13-14:

*"I saw in the night visions,
and behold, with the clouds of heaven
there came one like a son of man,
and he came to the Ancient of Days
and was presented before him.*

*And to him was given dominion
and glory and a kingdom,
that all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve him;
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom one
that shall not be destroyed.*

3. How would you summarize Mark 8:27-38 in your own words?



1. **Circle** the name Jesus gives himself
2. **Underline** references to what it looks like to follow Jesus
3. **Highlight** references to the identity of Christ

Mark 8

Peter Confesses Jesus as the Christ

27 And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” 28 And they told him, “John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets.” 29 And he asked them, “But who do you say that I am?” Peter answered him, “You are the Christ.” 30 And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

31 And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32 And he said this plainly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33 But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

34 And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 35 For whoever would save his life[a] will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. 36 For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? 37 For what can a man give in return for his soul? 38 For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Mark 9

1 And he said to them, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power.”

The Transfiguration

2 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, 3 and his clothes became radiant, intensely white, as no one[b] on earth could bleach them. 4 And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. 5 And Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi,[c] it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 6 For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. 7 And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my beloved Son:[d] listen to him.” 8 And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but Jesus only.

9 And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. 10 So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead might mean. 11 And they asked him, “Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” 12 And he said to them, “Elijah does come first to restore all things. And how is it written of the Son of Man that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? 13 But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him.”

Jesus Heals a Boy with an Unclean Spirit

14 And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. 15 And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. 16 And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” 17 And someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. 18 And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able.” 19 And he answered them, “O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me.” 20 And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. 21 And Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. 22 And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” 23 And Jesus said to him, “If you can! All things are possible for one who believes.” 24 Immediately the father of the child cried out[e] and said, “I believe: help my unbelief!” 25 And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” 26 And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, “He is dead.” 27 But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. 28 And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why could we not cast it out?” 29 And he said to them, “This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer.”[f]



Session 2

Once Peter makes his confession that Jesus is the Christ (Mark 8:29), the whole tone of Mark's gospel shifts. Whereas the first half of Mark's gospel focused primarily on Jesus' authority, the second half focuses primarily on how being "the Christ" meant he must suffer. Unprepared for this, Peter rebuked Jesus (8:31-32).

Jesus' path of suffering also has implications for those who would follow him (8:34-38). If he suffers, then those of us who follow him will suffer too. Some have referred to Mark 8:31-10:52 as the "way" section (as in the "way" of discipleship or the "way" to Jerusalem). In addition to predicting his own suffering and death three times (8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34), Jesus demonstrates the cost of being his disciple.

In Session 2, watch how Jesus' predictions of suffering continue to rub up against his disciples' desire for esteem and greatness. Two big themes dominate this section: 1) whole-hearted commitment to Jesus, and 2) the importance of caring for others, especially the "least". Consider how one (or both) of these themes show up in the many scenes that follow.

Read Mark 9:30-10:52. Using the scripture pages at the back of the workbook, read this week's text in one sitting. Read the text a second time and write down any initial observations you notice. Keep in mind the themes of whole-hearted commitment to Jesus and caring for the least of these. There are suggested annotations for each session.

1. **Circle** key words such as *child/ren, little ones*
2. **Underline** responses to Jesus' words or actions
3. **Highlight** "first shall be last"-type language



After you've read the text multiple times and made your own observations, answer the study questions for this section.

1. Write out 2-3 things that stood out to you as you studied this passage.

2. How do the disciples respond when Jesus predicts his death for the second time (v. 32)? How does this differ from how we've seen them act elsewhere in this gospel? (See Mark 4:10; 7:17; 9:11, 28; 10:10.) Why might they feel reluctant to do what they've felt free to do in other situations?

3. Jesus is now calling the disciples to have salt in themselves (9:50), rather than the divisive "yeast" of the Pharisees (8:15). Make note of each time Jesus says, "it is better..." in 9:42-50. How does this illustrate the radical call to follow Jesus?

Salt

"...In Scripture, [salt] is an emblem of the covenant between God and His people, Num 18:19; 2Ch 13:5.

Food is seasoned with 'salt'; every meal offering was to contain it, and it was to be offered with all offerings presented by Israelites, as emblematic of the holiness of Christ, and as betokening the reconciliation provided for man by God on the ground of the death of Christ, Lev 2:13.

To refuse God's provision in Christ and the efficacy of His expiatory sacrifice is to expose oneself to the doom of being 'salted with fire,' Mar 9:49."

- Vine's Expository Dictionary

In Mark 10, we see the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus into answering a question about divorce. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 stated that if a man found some indecency in his wife and chose to divorce her, and if she then married another man who also divorced her, the first man could not remarry her. This law was meant to prevent an easy divorce culture in which Israel's women could be traded like property.

Divorce

In Jesus' day, the Pharisees had broadened their definition of "indecency" to include any trivial thing a husband might dislike about his wife, be it her cooking or even her appearance.

A law meant to protect the women of Israel had become a justification for their own self-indulgence, all at the expense of the women (and children) who would have been economically dependent on them.

4. How does Jesus respond to the question posed by the Pharisees (10:5-9)? How does knowing how this law was mis-used help us to understand Jesus' response?

Jesus uses the motif of children throughout this section. In Jesus' day, children were not highly valued. They had no power or status and were at the bottom of the social ladder. As such, they were completely dependent on others. For anyone striving for personal greatness, children were of little use in helping them get there. Review your annotations on Jesus' references to children or little ones and keep in mind the use of each reference as you work through these questions.

5. How is the rich man different from the children seen in 10:13-16? How might that explain his response in 10:22?

6. Read Mark 9:35 and 10:44 and look for a key phrase that is repeated in these two verses. What other similarities do you notice with the context of these separate events? How is the call of discipleship reflected in these verses?

7. While Jesus has predicted his death three times now, in 10:45 he mentions the purpose of his death to the disciples. What does he say his death will accomplish?

Ransom

(paid for slaves, Leviticus 19:20; for captives, Isaiah 45:13; for the ransom of a life, Exodus 21:30; Numbers 35:31f):

to liberate many from the misery and penalty of their sins

- Strong's Concordance

8. After Bartimaeus cried out for Jesus to have mercy on him, “many rebuked him, telling him to be silent” (10:48). Where else in this section have we seen someone be “rebuked” for approaching Jesus? What does this communicate about Bartimaeus’ status in that society?

9. Jesus asked the same question of Bartimaeus (10:51) as he did of James and John (10:36). What were their responses to the same question?

10. Write down some ways you see one or both of these themes emphasized in each passage.

	Whole-hearted commitment to Jesus	Caring for others, including the least of these
9:30-37		
9:38-50		
10:1-12		
10:13-31		
10:32-52		



Session 2 Application

Reflect and Respond

Use these four questions to pray and reflect on what you've read this week. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict and guide you during this time.

Reflect

What do we learn about God in this passage and how should we respond to God as a result?

Look for:

- *God's character, concerns, and conduct*
- *Things to praise and thank God for*
- *Sin to confess and repent of*
- *Promises and truths to believe*

What do we learn about people in this passage and how should we respond to others?

Look for:

- *How they reflect God's character in the text*
- *How they reject God and his rule in the text*
- *Examples or ways to love, serve, and care for others*

Respond

What will these truths look like in action for you this week?

What questions do I still have? How will I investigate this further?



Notes

Small group discussion | Large group teaching



Session 3

Sometimes in film and literature, a story's setting can function as a character in its own right. In the same way, the temple in Jerusalem is almost like a character in this section of Mark (11:1-13:37). After recounting Jesus' arrival to the temple (11:1-11), almost every event and conversation that Mark records in chapters 11 and 12 takes place there. Even after Jesus departs from it (chapter 13), the conversation he has with his disciples revolves around the temple.

The temple's significance was that it was the sign of God's presence among his people and thus the embodiment of Israel's national identity. As you read chapters 11 and 12 for this session, note how Jesus' arrival at what is rightfully his is received by the crowds and religious leaders. Also look for how Jesus' authority is both challenged and demonstrated. Finally, pay attention to how 12:1-12 illustrates the main focus of Mark 11-13: God's judgment on Israel.

Read Mark 11:1-12:44. Using the scripture pages at the back of the workbook, read this week's text in one sitting. Read the text a second time, writing down any initial observations you have.



1. **Circle** anytime the temple is mentioned
2. **Underline** reactions from the religious authorities to Jesus
3. **Highlight** examples of Jesus pronouncing judgment against the religious authorities

After you've read the text multiple times and made your own observations, work through the following questions.

1. In what ways do you see Jesus' authority challenged and demonstrated in this section?

2. Mark uses a distinct storytelling technique called an intercalation, in which he follows an A-B-A format and a single story is split in half and another story appears between the two halves. This technique helps us to interpret each story in relation to the other. It is also referred to as a Markan sandwich. One example of this is Mark 5:21-43:

- A¹ - Jairus pleads with Jesus to save his daughter, vv 21-24*
- B - Woman with a hemorrhage touches Jesus, vv 25-34*
- A² - Jesus raises Jairus's daughter, vv 35-43*

Mark 11:12-25 is considered to be an intercalation. Identify the three sections of the Markan sandwich and summarize each section.

Intercalation (or Markan sandwich)

"The technique is, to be sure, a literary technique, but its purpose is theological; that is, the sandwiches emphasize the major motifs of the Gospel, especially the meaning of faith, discipleship, bearing witness, and the dangers of apostasy."

- James R. Edwards

Verses	Summary sentence

3. How do we understand Mark 11:12-25 in light of the theme of God's judgment on Israel?

4. Read Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:5-11. What connections do you see in Mark 11:15-19?

5. Jesus utilizes parables as his means of communicating to those who are "outside" (4:11). His first use of parables was when his authority was challenged by the Pharisees (3:23-29). What is the main

idea of the parable of the tenants (12:1-12)?

6. Jesus says that a coin that bears Caesar's likeness, or image, belongs to Caesar and should be given to him (12:16-17). According to Genesis 1:26-27, what bears God's image? What does Jesus have in mind by telling his audience to give "to God the things that are God's"?

7. In what ways is the teacher asking about the most important commandment like the rich young man from 10:17-22? What does Jesus' response say about the teacher (12:34)?

8. How does Jesus characterize the scribes in 12:38-40? How might his description of them explain his response in 12:41-44 and why the poor widow had so little money to give?

9. How would you summarize this section in 1-2 sentences?



Session 3 Application

Reflect and Respond

Use these four questions to pray and reflect on what you've read this week. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict and guide you during this time.

Reflect

What do we learn about God in this passage and how should we respond to God as a result?

Look for:

- *God's character, concerns, and conduct*
- *Things to praise and thank God for*
- *Sin to confess and repent of*
- *Promises and truths to believe*

What do we learn about people in this passage and how should we respond to others?

Look for:

- *How they reflect God's character in the text*
- *How they reject God and his rule in the text*
- *Examples or ways to love, serve, and care for others*

Respond

What will these truths look like in action for you this week?

What questions do I still have? How will I investigate this further?



Notes

Small group discussion | Large group teaching



SESSION 2

Mark 9



1. **Circle** key words such as *child/ren, little ones*
2. **Underline** responses to Jesus' words or actions
3. **Highlight** "first shall be last"-type language

Jesus Again Foretells Death, Resurrection

30 They went on from there and passed through Galilee. And he did not want anyone to know, 31 for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise." 32 But they did not understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him.

Who Is the Greatest?

33 And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" 34 But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. 35 And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all." 36 And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, 37 "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me."

Anyone Not Against Us Is for Us

38 John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, [f] and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." 39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 For the one who is not against us is for us. 41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

Temptations to Sin

42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, [g] it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, [h] to the unquenchable fire. [i] 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.' 49 For everyone will be

salted with fire.[j] 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

Mark 10

Teaching About Divorce

1 And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.

2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” 3 He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” 4 They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” 5 And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ 7 ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife,[k] 8 and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

10 And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11 And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Let the Children Come to Me

13 And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. 14 But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me: do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. 15 Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.” 16 And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

The Rich Young Man

17 And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” 18 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: ‘Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.’” 20 And he said to him, “Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth.” 21 And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and

you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” 22 Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23 And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how difficult it is[] to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.” 26 And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him,[m] “Then who can be saved?” 27 Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.” 28 Peter began to say to him, “See, we have left everything and followed you.” 29 Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

Jesus Foretells His Death a Third Time

32 And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, 33 saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. 34 And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise.”

The Request of James and John

35 And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” 36 And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” 37 And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” 38 Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” 39 And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized, 40 but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” 41 And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. 42 And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over

them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 43 But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant,^[u] 44 and whoever would be first among you must be slave^[o] of all. 45 For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus Heals Blind Bartimaeus

46 And they came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. 47 And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” 48 And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” 49 And Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” And they called the blind man, saying to him, “Take heart. Get up; he is calling you.” 50 And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51 And Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” And the blind man said to him, “Rabbi, let me recover my sight.” 52 And Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him on the way.

Footnotes

- a. [Mark 9:38](#) Some manuscripts add *who does not follow us*
- b. [Mark 9:42](#) Greek *to stumble*; also verses [43](#), [45](#), [47](#)
- c. [Mark 9:43](#) Greek *Gehenna*; also verse [47](#)
- d. [Mark 9:43](#) Some manuscripts add verses [44](#) and [46](#) (which are identical with verse [48](#))
- e. [Mark 9:49](#) Some manuscripts add *and every sacrifice will be salted with salt*
- f. [Mark 10:7](#) Some manuscripts omit *and hold fast to his wife*
- g. [Mark 10:24](#) Some manuscripts add *for those who trust in riches*
- h. [Mark 10:26](#) Some manuscripts *to one another*
- i. [Mark 10:43](#) Greek *diakonos*
- j. [Mark 10:44](#) Or *bondservant*, or *servant* (for the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface)



SESSION 3

Mark 11



1. **Circle** anytime the temple is mentioned
2. **Underline** reactions from the religious authorities to Jesus
3. **Highlight** examples of Jesus pronouncing judgment against the religious authorities

The Triumphal Entry

1 Now when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus^[a] sent two of his disciples 2 and said to them, “Go into the village in front of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it. 3 If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.’” 4 And they went away and found a colt tied at a door outside in the street, and they untied it. 5 And some of those standing there said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” 6 And they told them what Jesus had said, and they let them go. 7 And they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. 8 And many spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. 9 And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! 10 Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest!”

11 And he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Jesus Curses the Fig Tree

12 On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13 And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14 And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

15 And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the

money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 16 And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17 And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." 18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching. 19 And when evening came they^[b] went out of the city.

The Lesson from the Withered Fig Tree

20 As they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21 And Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." 22 And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23 Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him. 24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received^[c] it, and it will be yours. 25 And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."^[d]

The Authority of Jesus Challenged

27 And they came again to Jerusalem. And as he was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him, 28 and they said to him, "By what authority are you doing these things, or who gave you this authority to do them?" 29 Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. 30 Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me." 31 And they discussed it with one another, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 32 But shall we say, 'From man'?"—they were afraid of the people, for they all held that John really was a prophet. 33 So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And Jesus said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Mark 12

The Parable of the Tenants

1 And he began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a pit for the winepress and built a tower, and leased it to tenants and went into another country. 2 When the season came, he sent a servant^[e] to the tenants to get from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. 3 And they took him and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 4 Again he sent to them another servant, and they struck him on the head and treated him shamefully. 5 And he sent another, and him they killed. And so with many others: some they beat, and some they killed. 6 He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 7 But those tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ 8 And they took him and killed him and threw him out of the vineyard. 9 What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. 10 Have you not read this Scripture:

“The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone:^[f]

11 this was the Lord's doing,

and it is marvelous in our eyes’?”

12 And they were seeking to arrest him but feared the people, for they perceived that he had told the parable against them. So they left him and went away.

Paying Taxes to Caesar

13 And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. 14 And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances,^[g] but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or

should we not?" 15 But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius[h] and let me look at it." 16 And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." 17 Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him.

The Sadducees Ask About the Resurrection

18 And Sadducees came to him, who say that there is no resurrection. And they asked him a question, saying, 19 "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife, but leaves no child, the man[i] must take the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. 20 There were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and when he died left no offspring. 21 And the second took her, and died, leaving no offspring. And the third likewise. 22 And the seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman also died. 23 In the resurrection, when they rise again, whose wife will she be? For the seven had her as wife."

24 Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are wrong, because you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God? 25 For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. 26 And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God spoke to him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? 27 He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong."

The Great Commandment

28 And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, "Which commandment is the most important of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The most important is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

32 And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. 33 And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” 34 And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Whose Son Is the Christ?

35 And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said, “How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? 36 David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared,

“The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet.”

37 David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?” And the great throng heard him gladly.

Beware of the Scribes

38 And in his teaching he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces 39 and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, 40 who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

The Widow's Offering

41 And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny.[i] 43 And he called his disciples to him and said to them, “Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are

contributing to the offering box. 44 For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

Footnotes

- a. [Mark 11:1](#) Greek *he*
- b. [Mark 11:19](#) Some manuscripts *he*
- c. [Mark 11:24](#) Some manuscripts *are receiving*
- d. [Mark 11:25](#) Some manuscripts add verse [26](#): *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses*
- e. [Mark 12:2](#) Or *bondservant*; also verse [4](#)
- f. [Mark 12:10](#) Greek *the head of the corner*
- g. [Mark 12:14](#) Greek *you do not look at people's faces*
- h. [Mark 12:15](#) A *denarius* was a day's wage for a laborer
- i. [Mark 12:19](#) Greek *his brother*
- j. [Mark 12:42](#) Greek *two lepta*, which make a *kodrantes*; a *kodrantes* (Latin *quadrans*) was a Roman copper coin worth about 1/64 of a *denarius* (which was a day's wage for a laborer)

“Taken from the ESV® Study Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright ©2008 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”



8 Questions to Help You Understand and Apply the Bible

Article by Matthew Harmon

Sometimes the most important things in the Christian life can be the most difficult.

That can certainly be true of understanding and applying the Bible.

As believers we know that reading Scripture is essential to following Jesus. But if we're honest, we often find it difficult to understand and apply. The Bible talks about so many different things; how do we know what to focus on? It's set in a world very different from ours; how do we apply it to our lives today?

One simple and effective tool is asking good questions. The questions we ask when we read the Bible largely determine how we understand and apply the Bible. So we need to make sure we are asking the right questions, the kind of questions the Bible was designed to answer. But how do we know what those questions are?

The Bible is first and foremost a story about God displaying his glory through creating and redeeming humans. It makes sense, then, that the Bible is designed to answer questions connected to this central theme. Jesus confirms this dual focus on God and humanity. When asked what the greatest commandment is, he replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt 22:37). But Jesus wasn't done. He continued, "And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matt 22:39). Love God. Love others. This is the heart of what God wants from his people.

Based on this foundation, there are four questions for understanding any passage, and four questions for applying any passage.

1. What do I learn about God?

God is the main character of the Bible, so he should be our starting point. Every passage of Scripture reveals something about God, even if he's not specifically mentioned. Look for his character (Rev. 4:8), his conduct (Ps. 23:1-6), and his concerns (Exod. 22:21-22). Also pay attention to all three persons of the Trinity (Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Cor. 13:14).

2. What do I learn about people?

As the pinnacle of God's creation, humans are at the center of his purposes. Think through what the passage reveals about our identity as divine image-bearers (Eccl. 3:11). Look for the fallen condition—the sinful beliefs, attitudes, feelings, actions, or tendencies mentioned or implied in the text (Prov. 6:16-19). Consider what the passage reveals about living as those who've been redeemed through the work of Christ (Rom. 12:9-13).

3. What do I learn about relating to God?

Loving God with our whole being expresses itself in a variety of ways. Start by looking for reasons to praise God (1 Pet. 1:3–5). Consider what sin you need to confess and repent of (1 John 1:5–10). Identify any promises God calls us to believe (1 Pet. 2:4–12).

4. What do I learn about relating to others?

God created us to be in community with one another. When he saves us from our sins, he makes us part of the body of Christ. Start by considering what the passage shows about interacting with others—family, friends, roommates, coworkers, classmates, neighbors, fellow believers, non-Christians, etc. (Eph. 4:25–5:2). Look for what the passage teaches about pursuing reconciliation with others (Rom. 12:18). Reflect on what the passage teaches about loving, serving, and caring well for others (Luke 10:25–37).

Based on that foundation, we can then ask four simple questions to help us apply the passage to our lives. When it comes to applying the Bible, we tend to gravitate toward what we should do in response. But since the goal of reading the Bible is being transformed into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18; Eph. 4:20–24), we must ask a set of questions that lead to more holistic application.

1. What does God want me to understand/think?

God has given us the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), but we are still tempted to think the way we did before we knew Christ (Eph. 4:17–19). Deep and lasting transformation begins with the renewal of our minds (Rom. 12:1–2). Reflect on any wrong ways of thinking that the passage exposes.

2. What does God want me to believe?

We may understand a truth at an intellectual level without letting it shape how we live. Jesus makes this distinction in the parable of the soils; those who initially receive God’s Word with joy but have no root will subsequently fall away from the gospel, since they fail to “hold it fast in an honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15). Consider what false beliefs the passage reveals and what gospel promises you need to believe.

3. What does God want me to desire?

This question targets the affections—the combination of desires, inclinations, feelings, and will that are the spring of our actions. God calls us to desire him above all else (Ps. 42:1–2), but apart from the work of the gospel we will desire what’s evil (Prov. 24:1–2). Reflect on how you see the sinful desires mentioned or implied in the passage show up in your own life, as well as the kind of godly desires you should be cultivating.

4. What does God want me to do?

When God’s Word changes how we think, what we functionally believe, and what we desire, it will produce tangible change in what we do and don’t do. Sometimes a passage gives us direct com-

mands (Rom. 12:9-17). But many are far less straightforward, requiring us to think carefully about specific actions in light of our current place in redemptive history. Think through what sinful actions the passage exposes in your own life as well as what godly actions you should pursue.

Armed with these eight questions, we put ourselves in a position where God's Spirit can take God's Word to transform us into the image of God's Son. Why not open your Bible and try them today?

Editors' note: For more on this topic, see Matthew Harmon's new book, "Asking the Right Questions: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Applying the Bible" (Crossway, 2017).

Matthew Harmon (PhD, Wheaton College) is professor of New Testament studies at Grace College and Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, Indiana. He was previously on staff with Cru for eight years and is the author of several books, including Jeremiah: A 12-Week Study and Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church. Matthew and his wife, Kate, live in Warsaw, Indiana, and have two sons.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/8-questions-to-help-you-understand-apply-the-bible/>

