



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

DEVOTIONAL & PRAYER JOURNAL

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WHY THIS DEVOTIONAL?

The Teaching Team at Hope Church collaborated to create this devotional to provide a resource for our church congregation to further study and engage with the Book of Mark as we teach and preach through the book, verse by verse, in our weekend worship gatherings.

It is our desire that this devotional be used as a tool to support Jesus followers, as they make the effort to make “God Time” a greater priority in their lives.

HOW DO I USE THIS DEVOTIONAL?

1. Listen to the sermon that corresponds with the text/devotional for the week. (hopechurchlv.com/mark).
2. In the days following, study the text in greater depth by reading the devotional content and responding to what you read by journaling a prayerful response.
3. For three days of each week, we have provided commentary excerpts and devotional content. On a fourth day, we encourage you to read/meditate on the text, and allow the Holy Spirit of God to speak to you directly through His Word.
4. On a fifth day, we encourage you to read and discuss the text with friends, co-workers, or in a Connection & Community group connected to Hope Church. (www.hopechurchlv.com/groups)
5. Everyday you personally interact with this devotional personally, we encourage you to write, either in this devotional or in a separate journal, a prayerful response to what God is saying to you through His Word.
6. Finally, for those of you who are wondering what to do with the other two days of the week—catch up on a day you missed or supplement your reading of the book of Mark by reading one chapter of the book of Psalms or Proverbs!

WHAT IS “GOD TIME?”

“God Time” is time spent *daily* alone in fellowship with God.

The call on the life of a Jesus follower is not doing things *for* God. The call on the life of a Jesus follower is to be *with* God. We believe that everything that God desires to do through your life, He will do out of the overflow of what He’s doing in your life as you spend time with Him!

With a definition of “God Time” in mind, this resource is designed to guide and support the time you invest each day in fellowship with God.

FAST FACTS ABOUT THE BOOK OF MARK

- Authored by John Mark, some time between 55-68 AD.
- Heavily influenced by the Apostle Peter.
- Positions Jesus, authoritatively, as the Son of God.
- Written to appeal to Roman Christians and is a fast-moving account.
- Tells us more about the actions of Jesus than the teachings of Jesus.
- Narrates most of the stories, also found in Matthew and Luke, but with greater vividness and conciseness.
- Is the shortest and simplest of the four Gospels.
- “Immediately” is Mark’s favorite word.
- 40% of Mark is devoted to a detailed account of the last 8 days of Jesus’ life.

WEEK 1

THE FORERUNNER AND FORGIVENESS

MARK 1:1-8

WEEK 1 | MARK 1:1-8 | DAY 1

THE FORERUNNER AND FORGIVENESS

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark 1:1

"First, this is the good news of Jesus, a genuine, historical person who walked this earth like other men. It is the good news of the Christ (which simply means "Messiah"), the promised, anointed Savior of men. And it is the good news of the Son of God, and a Son in more than a sense that we think of all men coming from God. Jesus is the unique Son of God, who is also God the Son." - David Guzik (*Enduring Word Commentary Series*)

God the Son is the Savior of man.

Saved from the consequences of sin. Saved from eternal separation from God. Saved from hopelessness and despair. Faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ makes this salvation possible!

How does the knowledge that you can be or have been saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ make you feel? How has being saved by Jesus changed your life? How should you express praise and thanksgiving to God for the gift of salvation you have received?

Consider these questions, and invest the next few moments reflecting and writing a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 1 | MARK 1:1-8 | DAY 2

THE FORERUNNER AND FORGIVENESS

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. Mark 1:6

"John's dress and lifestyle were a protest against the godlessness and self-serving materialism of his day. It amounted to a call to separate oneself from the sinful culture, repent, and live a life focused on God." - R. Kent Hughes (*Preaching the Word Commentary*)

The preparer of the way of the Lord lived countercultural to the world.

Different dress. Different eating habits. Different focus. In conforming to the image of Christ, John was non-conforming to the societal norms of his day.

Think about your own life. Are there any noticeable difference between how you live and how others who don't follow Jesus live? How do you intentionally separate yourself from the sinful culture? How do you manage the tension of living *in* the world but not being *of* the world?

Are there ways in which the Holy Spirit is convicting you to live more counter-culturally? Are there ways the Holy Spirit is convicting you to confess and repent for succumbing to the patterns of the world? How should you express praise and thanksgiving to God for empowering you to live godly while being surrounded by ungodliness?

Consider these questions, and invest the next few moments reflecting and writing a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 1 | MARK 1:1-8 | DAY 3

THE FORERUNNER AND FORGIVENESS

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I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Mark 1:8

"It is as if John is saying, 'All I can do is wash you on the outside with water. But He can transform and cleanse you on the inside.' Being baptized with the Holy Spirit refers to the regenerative work of salvation. This is not a reference to an ecstatic experience, as some contemporary charismatics claim. Rather, it is the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit that occurs at the moment of salvation." - John MacArthur (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)

John's baptism with water was an external demonstration of repentance for sin. But Jesus' baptism (immersion) in the Holy Spirit provides an internal purification from our sins!

Cleansed. Refreshed. Renewed. Purified. Washed clean from the ill-effects of sin. This is the impact of the baptism of the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ lived, died, and rose again to provide.

Do you believe that through faith in Jesus Christ you are both forgiven of your sin and cleansed of your unrighteousness? Do you relate to God confidently because you believe you been cleansed or do you relate to God reluctantly because you doubt your sin qualifies for Christ's cleansing?

Consider these questions, and invest the next few moments reflecting and writing a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 1 | MARK 1:1-8 | DAY 4

THE FORERUNNER AND FORGIVENESS

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

After reading the above passage, at least 3 times slowly and prayerfully, write out the phrase from this passage that is most meaningful to you...

Why is the phrase you chose most meaningful to you?

What step of obedience is the Holy Spirit of God leading you to take in light of what God is revealing to you in His Word?

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 1 | MARK 1:1-8 | DAY 5

THE FORERUNNER AND FORGIVENESS

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'"

John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

**Read the text aloud in your group 2-3 times.
Then, discuss the following questions together.**

1. What part of this text is most significant to you and why?
2. What part of this weekend's message about the text was the most significant to you and why?
3. What is one characteristic you discover about Jesus from the text?
4. How is what you heard or learned going to affect how you live?
5. What next step is the Holy Spirit leading you to take in light of what we have read and discussed?

Close your group time praying together using the scripture that we're studying and the following prayer prompts as a guide...

1. God we praise you because you are...
2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 2

BELOVED SON

MARK 1:9-11

WEEK 2 | MARK 1:9-11 | DAY 1

BELOVED SON

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Mark 1:9

"When Jesus came to the baptism of John, though he had not sinned, He had come into the world to bear the sins of others. Jesus was identifying himself with you and me. 'The Lord hath laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53:6). When Jesus came to his baptism He got beneath the burden of human sin and bore it all the way to Calvary. Jesus paid the price for our sins. His baptism identified him with our sins." - Jerry Vines (*Exploring the Gospels*)

Though Jesus was the beloved Son of God, He was not above identifying with the besetting sins of man.

Jesus, through his baptism, identified with our sins. Jesus, through his baptism, fulfilled all righteousness. (Matthew 3:14-15) Jesus, through his baptism, obeyed His Heavenly Father in the same way that His followers would also be called to obey.

How does it bless you to have a King who was without sin, yet willing to identify with our sin? How does it uplift you to have a Savior who fulfilled every righteous requirement of the law so that His righteousness could be gifted to you? How does it encourage you to have a Lord who lived the life we should live in submission to God, first, before ever asking us to do the same?

This humble humanity of Jesus Christ should inspire us and cause us to feel a closeness to Christ that we would not have felt had He not obeyed God in this way.

Take a few moments to contemplate the humility and obedience of Jesus Christ, as exemplified through His baptism, and write out a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. God is worthy of your praise!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 2 | MARK 1:9-11 | DAY 2

BELOVED SON

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. Mark 1:10

"When Jesus was baptized along with all the repenting people who wanted to be on God's side, it was as though the commander-in-chief had come to the front lines, fastened his bayonet, strapped on his helmet, and jumped into the trench along with the rest of us. And when he did that, his Father in heaven, who had sent him for this very combat, signified with the appearance of a dove that the Holy Spirit would be with him in the battles to come." - John Piper (*Christ in Combat*)

Our Savior is a Holy Spirit empowered Son!

Jesus ministered through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus obeyed through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus performed miracles through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus lived His sinless life through the power of the Holy Spirit. And, it was at the baptism of Jesus that the Holy Spirit empowered Jesus Christ for the public ministry that awaited Him.

And...through faith in Jesus Christ, the same Holy Spirit who empowered Christ, is available to empower you and me!

Do you live with an *awareness* of the power of the Holy Spirit? Do you live with a *dependence* on the power of the Holy Spirit? Do you live with a *sensitivity* to the Holy Spirit and His leading in your life?

If Jesus Christ needed the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit to fulfill His mission on earth, how much more do we need the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill God's plan for our lives as well?

Invest some time thinking about the gift of God's Holy Spirit to you. Reflect on the Holy Spirit's activity in your life and write out a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 2 | MARK 1:9-11 | DAY 3

BELOVED SON

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.

Mark 1:8

"This declaration of the Father's love for His Son cannot be overstated and must not be overlooked. No prophet ever heard words like these! Abraham was a friend (Isa 41:8). Moses was a servant (Deut 34:5). Aaron was a chosen one (Ps 105:26). David was a man after God's own heart (1 Sam 13:4). But only Israel and the king of Israel (as their representative; Ps 2:7) were called God's sons. Now they are united in the person of the Servant King, Jesus of Nazareth! James Edward says, 'Jesus is Israel reduced to one'. As the Messiah and Son of God, Jesus is the second Adam, a new Israel, and a perfect King who will succeed where they each failed!" - Daniel L. Akin (*Christ-Centered Exposition, Exalting Jesus in Mark*)

Jesus is the beloved Son of God!

Foretold by John the Baptist. Empowered by the Holy Spirit. Affirmed, audibly, in this epic moment following Christ's baptism, by Almighty God!

Do you relate to Jesus as the beloved Son of God? Do you worship Jesus as God in the flesh? Do you acknowledge that though Jesus was fully man, He was also fully God?

Unlike every imperfect prophet that preceded Him, Jesus was the one, perfect, Messiah who every previous prophet's prophecy pointed to!

Behold the beauty, splendor, and majesty of God's beloved Son, Jesus Christ. After investing some time considering the divinity of Jesus Christ, write out a prayerful response of praise and adoration to your Heavenly Father. He is worthy!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 2 | MARK 1:9-11 | DAY 4

BELOVED SON

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

After reading the above passage, at least 3 times slowly and prayerfully, write out the phrase from this passage that is most meaningful to you...

Why is the phrase you chose most meaningful to you?

What step of obedience is the Holy Spirit of God leading you to take in light of what God is revealing to you in His Word?

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 2 | MARK 1:9-11 | DAY 5

BELOVED SON

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

**Read the text aloud in your group 2-3 times.
Then, discuss the following questions together.**

1. What part of this text is most significant to you and why?
2. What part of this weekend's message about the text was the most significant to you and why?
3. What is one characteristic you discover about Jesus from the text?
4. How is what you heard or learned going to affect how you live?
5. What next step is the Holy Spirit leading you to take in light of what we have read and discussed?

Close your group time praying together using the scripture that we're studying and the following prayer prompts as a guide...

1. God we praise you because you are...
2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 3

TEMPTED BY SATAN

MARK 1:12-15

WEEK 3 | MARK 1:12-15 | DAY 1

TEMPTED BY SATAN

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. Mark 1:12

"Why is this important? Remember, Jesus is fully human. While He is nonetheless our Savior, He is also our exemplar of humanity in right relationship with God. We are not God, but we do have His Spirit living within us. Therefore, we can follow the impelling of the Spirit to do as He commands, just like Jesus." – Chuck Swindoll (*Living Insight's New Testament Commentary of Mark*)

Satan is a liar.

From the very beginning of creation, Jesus said that the enemy, also known as the devil or Satan, was a liar. It's his native language. In the Garden of Eden, Satan deceived our first parents, Adam and Eve, with the subtle lie, "Did God *really* say...?" Here in the first page of the Gospel of Mark, he does the same thing. What is the significance of the Spirit of God leading Jesus to be tempted?

In the very beginning of this story of the Son of God, we are shown that Jesus is very human. Tired. Lonely. Hungry. Tempted. But the Spirit led Jesus to the desert to show us a glorious truth: We can have victory over the enemy's temptation! How? The same way Jesus did: by the Spirit of God. The same Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness, is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, and He is the same Spirit who lives in us today as Jesus followers. You can have victory over the enemy's temptation today!

Write out a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father for this glorious truth!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 3 | MARK 1:12-15 | DAY 2

TEMPTED BY SATAN

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

**Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee,
proclaiming the gospel of God... Mark 1:14**

"The Gospel is called "the Gospel of God" because it comes from God and brings us to God. It is "the Gospel of the kingdom" because faith in the Savior brings you into His kingdom. It is the "Gospel of Jesus Christ" because He is the heart of it; without His life, death, and resurrection, there would be no Good News. Paul called it "the Gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24) because there can be no salvation apart from grace (Eph. 2:8-9). There is only one Gospel (Gal. 1:1-9), and it centers in what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross (1 Cor. 15:1-11)." – Warren Wiersbe (*Be Diligent - Mark*)

Gospel means good news.

We live in a world that is constantly "proclaiming" bad news. Every feed, every news cycle, and every headline trends towards news that may get clicks but doesn't give joy. The same was true for the original audience Mark was writing to. Roman Christians were berated with constant bad news: another Christian execution, yet another imprisonment, etc. But, praise God for the Good News! The gospel is the power of God that brings salvation (Romans 1:16)! No matter what bad news befalls us today, do what Jesus did in Galilee in our text today: proclaim the Gospel of God.

Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, took our place and paid for our sin. We were separated from God because of our sin and He redeemed us, brought us back into right standing before Him. He died so we could live. He rose so we could have life in His name. Today as a Jesus follower, you are a loved, accepted, forgiven child of the Most High God. Proclaim that in your life today!

In light of the beauty of the Good News of the Gospel, write out a prayerful response. God is worthy to be praised!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 3 | MARK 1:12-15 | DAY 3

TEMPTED BY SATAN

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

**"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand;
repent and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:15**

"With the appearance of the Messiah-King, the "kingdom of God" has drawn near. In the person of Jesus Christ, men are confronted head on with the kingdom—the reign of God. What should be our response? Jesus gives His hearers two commands—repent and believe in the gospel. " – Daniel Akin (*Christ-Centered Exposition - Mark*)

The time is fulfilled.

When we read the Bible, we turn page after page without always being aware that years and decades are being represented in the pages we turn. When we read the Bible in a year (a great but intense task), we read through 5,000+ years of history in 365 days. This is significant because when Jesus declares that "the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand," it was a bomb-drop moment.

For thousands of years, the people of God had been clinging to a promise of the kingdom of God being fulfilled. Through droughts, deserts, captivities, hundreds of missteps, and hundreds more calamities, Jesus just said in effect, "It's all culminated in what is happening right now." What was happening? The Son of God was here. God's promise was fulfilled. He did what He said He would do. So how should we respond? The same way Jesus told the people then to respond, repent and believe the Gospel.

Write a prayerful response of worship and thanksgiving for God's promises being fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and include where you need to confess and repent of sin.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 3 | MARK 1:12-15 | DAY 4

TEMPTED BY SATAN

The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

After reading the above passage, at least 3 times slowly and prayerfully, write out the phrase from this passage that is most meaningful to you...

Why is the phrase you chose most meaningful to you?

What step of obedience is the Holy Spirit of God leading you to take in light of what God is revealing to you in His Word?

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 3 | MARK 1:12-15 | DAY 5

TEMPTED BY SATAN

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Close your group time praying together using the scripture that we're studying and the following prayer prompts as a guide...

1. God we praise you because you are...
2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 4

THE FIRST FOLLOWERS

MARK 1:16-20

WEEK 4 | MARK 1:16-20 | DAY 1

THE FIRST FOLLOWERS

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

"Follow me..." Mark 1:17a

"Many had become followers of Jesus in the informal sense. Now Jesus asked the men to deepen their commitment, challenging them to go 'all-in,' to set aside all other priorities—including family, vocation, and financial security—to become full-time students of the Christ. That's the essence of the invitation 'Follow Me.'" - Chuck Swindoll (*Living Insight's New Testament Commentary of Mark*)

Full-time followers.

Followers who forsake their own ambitions. Followers who are willing to have their plans changed. Followers who are open to leaving what they're best at in exchange for pursuing God's best. Followers who are ready to leave what is comfortable for what may be uncomfortable. Followers whose "Yes" is on the table, always. These are the characteristics of a full-time follower of Jesus Christ.

Are you a full-time follower of Jesus Christ? What have you given up, left, or abandoned to follow Jesus? What are the things that the Holy Spirit of God may be asking you to give up, leave, or abandon to follow Jesus in a more "full-time" way? Is there anything you are unwilling to "leave" to follow Jesus more wholeheartedly?

Though these are challenging questions to consider, they may be questions that lead to breakthrough in your relationship with Jesus!

Write out a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father thanking Him for the things that you *have* left to follow Jesus and asking Him for the courage and strength to leave the things you *haven't* yet left to follow Jesus.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 4 | MARK 1:16-20 | DAY 2

THE FIRST FOLLOWERS

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"...and I will make you become fishers of men." Mark 1:17b

The meaning of this expression is clear and unmistakable. The disciples were to become fishers for souls. They were to labor to draw people out of darkness and into light, and from the power of Satan to God. They were to strive to bring people into the net of Christ's church, so that they might be saved and not perish everlastingly. – J.C. Ryle (*The Crossway Classic Commentaries*)

Soul-winning followers.

Followers who share the Good News of Jesus Christ. Followers who invite non-believers to believe in the Good News of Jesus Christ. Followers whose hearts are broken for those who will experience a Christ-less eternity unless they confess Jesus Christ as Lord and do something about it. These were the characteristics of the first followers of Jesus Christ.

And the invitation that was extended to them, is extended to all followers of Jesus Christ—to be made "fishers of men."

Who "fished" for you? Who made the Good News of Jesus Christ clear for you? When was the last time you praised God for the person responsible for leading you into a relationship with Jesus Christ?

Is your heart burdened for the lost? Do you share the Gospel with people who don't yet have a relationship with Jesus? Who do you currently know that you can share the Gospel with?

Consider these questions and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father thanking Him for saving you, and asking Him for the strength and courage to become a "fisher of men."

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 4 | MARK 1:16-20 | DAY 3

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And immediately they left their nets and followed him. Mark 1:18

"Though these rugged fishermen were hardly pushovers, there was no resistance or hesitation on their part. They immediately dropped everything to follow Jesus. Their response demonstrates both the Lord's authority and the power that moves in those He called to respond." – John MacArthur (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)

Unhesitant followers.

They didn't ask questions. They didn't ask for time to think about it. They didn't give excuses for why they couldn't. Instead, they *immediately* left their nets (James and John left their father!) and followed Jesus.

Christ's authority compelled them. Christ's authority motivated them. Christ's power moved them!

How do you respond to authoritative voice of Jesus Christ in your life? When you read God's Word how do you respond to Christ's commands? When the Holy Spirit of God speaks to you, do you delay? Do you desire to be the type of follower of Jesus Christ who obeys His voice with less hesitation? (Luke 11:28)

Consider these questions and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. Ask the Holy Spirit of God to empower you to respond to God's voice without hesitation!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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WEEK 4 | MARK 1:16-20 | DAY 5

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WEEK 5

NO ONE LIKE JESUS

MARK 1:21-34

NO ONE LIKE JESUS

And they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes. And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying out with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." And at once his fame spread everywhere throughout all the surrounding region of Galilee.

And immediately he left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her. And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick or oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

And they were astonished at his teaching...Mark 1:22a

"Mark tells us nothing about the content of Jesus' teaching in this passage. Mark's focus is the One who is teaching, His authority, and the astonishing response of the hearers. The listeners were amazed and alarmed. His teachings were disturbing in their very nature. Today, we might say, 'They were blown away'" –Daniel Akin (*Exalting Jesus in Mark*)

Presence Like No Other

Mark's gospel account records that after an encounter with Jesus, people in the synagogue were astonished. That is very significant because, as you know, astonishment is not an everyday emotion. Very few people, places, or things leave us astonished. However, today's key verse reveals people were deeply moved by Jesus' presence, teaching, and life.

Unfortunately, for many Jesus followers, knowing Him has become familiar, common, or even routine. What if, today, you began to seek the Lord with a fresh passion for being astonished in His presence? Psalm 33:8 says, "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!" Jesus' presence is as powerful today as it was then. He still longs to meet with His people and for us to be in awe of Him. May your time with the Lord today move you beyond a normal routine to a place of astonishment.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

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God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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...for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.

Mark 1:22b

"If a man ever spoke with authority, it was Jesus Christ. It has been said that the scribes spoke *from* authorities, but that Jesus spoke *with* authority." – Warren Wiersbe (*Be Diligent: A New Testament Study – Mark*)

Authority Like No Other

In Mark chapter 1, the One standing before the people to teach in the synagogue was not simply a preacher or messenger of the Scriptures; He was the author. And the author has authority like none before or since. Every word of Scripture is God-breathed and intended to guide your every step as you pursue His life-changing plan for your life. Think about this: God not only loves you and has made way for you to be forgiven and reconciled to Himself, but He also has a plan for your life.

Because of who Jesus is and what He has done, He has all authority. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The One who has all authority is also seeking to speak to you and be a guide for you. God is not only powerful, but He is also personal. What a reality!

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"The miracles of Jesus authenticated His message; with every healing, more people heard the gospel. With every demonized person set free, multitudes were prompted to seek out this remarkable teacher. Compassion kept Him with His patients long into the night." – Charles Swindoll (*Swindoll's Living Insight: New Testament Commentary – Mark*)

Compassion Like No Other

Someone who has compassion is sympathetic for the distress of others and has a desire to relieve it. No one demonstrated this characteristic more than Jesus. He was broken over the brokenness of humanity. The burdens of people burdened Him. He was willing to bestow supernatural ability in the midst of the world's inability.

As you read these words today, do you need Christ's compassion? Is there an area of your life where you are experiencing distress, struggle, or pain? Today's key verses reveal that God is ready to show you compassion in your distress. Jesus performed miracles among those in need. His miracles were not reserved for the elite or wealthy. The only requirement to experience compassion from Jesus is need, and we *all* have it.

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WEEK 6

INTIMACY FUELED MINISTRY

MARK 1:35-39

WEEK 6 | MARK 1:35-39 | DAY 1

INTIMACY FUELED MINISTRY

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. Mark 1:35

"The work of the Son of God is both an inward and an outward work. Jesus cannot extend himself outward in compassion without first attending to the source of his mission and purpose with the Father; and, conversely, his oneness with the Father compels him outward in mission. The significance of Jesus' ministry consists not simply in what he does for humanity, but equally in who he is in relation to the Father. Jesus is, according to Mark's narrative, neither contemplative ascetic nor social activist. He does not promote an agenda but derives a ministry from a relationship with the Father." - James R. Edwards (*The Gospel According to Mark*)

Busy days in ministry for Christ were preceded by early mornings in intimacy with God.

Not too busy to pray. Not too busy to communicate with His Father. Not too busy to acknowledge where His power came from and ask for help, wisdom, and guidance. This was the life of Christ.

Is prayer a priority to you? Do you pursue intentional times of communicating with God? Do you recognize that without consistent intimacy with Jesus, fruitful ministry for Jesus is impossible? (John 15:5)

What does it say about Jesus that He made seeking God in prayer a priority? What should it mean for us that Jesus made seeking God in prayer a priority?

Think about these questions. Consider the implications of your answers, and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. He longs to hear from you!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 6 | MARK 1:35-39 | DAY 2

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And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." Mark 1:36-37

"Jesus was saddened by this news. He knew the multitudes were pressing to the door looking for healing, not for truth. They were not coming to Him to hear the announcement of the breakthrough of the kingdom of God. They were not flocking to Him so that they could listen to Him preach the gospel or expound the Word of God. They were coming to look for improvement to their health or relief of their suffering. Of course, there was nothing wrong with people coming to Jesus out of their needs of the flesh. Yet that was not the chief end for which He had come." - R.C. Sproul (*Mark: An Expositional Commentary*)

Is the purpose for why God came to man the purpose for why you come to God?

What do you come to God for? Physical needs to be met? Financial concerns to be addressed? Relational needs to be fulfilled? Emotional needs to be satisfied?

Though coming to God for these things isn't necessarily wrong, coming to God for only these things isn't the real reason for which Jesus came!

Jesus came to meet our most significant needs — our spiritual needs. The need for forgiveness. The need for reconciliation with Almighty God. The need for righteousness.

Take some time to consider why you "look" for God. Why do you "search" for God? Is it more for your material needs to be addressed or for your spiritual needs to be met? After reflecting on these questions, write out a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. Your motivations for seeking Him are worth being explored.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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WEEK 6 | MARK 1:35-39 | DAY 3

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"He brushed off their excited observation and instead refocused their attention on His mission. The pressing physical needs of humanity were not unimportant to the Lord, but neither did they dictate His agenda. He performed miracles to authenticate His message and to set His message apart from others', but personal recognition was never the objective." - Charles R. Swindoll (*Swindoll's Living Insights - New Testament Commentary on Mark*)

Attention on Jesus was not a distraction to Jesus.

No amount of notoriety. No amount of human need. No amount of clamoring. Nothing, would distract Jesus from the true reason for why He had come—to preach the Good News.

Jesus was, even in the midst of everyone fighting for His attention, focused on the mission of God. He was not captive to the people's perceived needs.

What distracts you? What sidetracks you from the main purposes of following Jesus—to know Christ and to make Christ known? What prevents you from seeking Christ first and His righteousness?

After considering these questions, write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father asking Him to give you a Christlike-focus and a supernatural ability to keep first things first!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

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WEEK 6 | MARK 1:35-39 | DAY 4

INTIMACY FUELED MINISTRY

And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons.

After reading the above passage, at least 3 times slowly and prayerfully, write out the phrase from this passage that is most meaningful to you...

Why is the phrase you chose most meaningful to you?

What step of obedience is the Holy Spirit of God leading you to take in light of what God is revealing to you in His Word?

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 6 | MARK 1:35-39 | DAY 5

INTIMACY FUELED MINISTRY

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1. God we praise you because you are...
2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 7

BE CLEAN

MARK 1:40-45

WEEK 7 | MARK 1:40-45 | DAY 1

BE CLEAN

And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And Jesus sternly charged him and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to them." But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in desolate places, and people were coming to him from every quarter.

"If you will, you can make me clean." Mark 1:40

"To be accurate, the leper did voice some hesitation by saying, 'If you will.' Although he knew Christ *could* heal him, he did not know whether Christ *would* heal him. This was a reasonable hesitation. He did not know the Lord and could not know what eternally motivated his heart. But where the leper has hesitation, we have certainty. We know the gospel. We know Jesus' heart. 'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (10:45). *Nothing is more in accord with the will of God than this!*" - R. Kent Hughes (*Preaching the Word Commentary*)

About the will of God.

Unlike the leper, we don't have to pray, "If you will" because we know God's will! God's will *is* for us to be made spiritually clean, and because we know that this is His will, we can boldly ask for Him to do it.

Cleanse me. Renew me. Refresh me. These are prayers you can confidently pray because your Heavenly Father desires to do this by and through the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Where do you need to be spiritually "cleaned?" What are the besetting sins, sinful habits, or ungodly ways of thinking that you need to confess and be cleansed of?

Consider these questions and write a prayerful response of praise for God's will to cleanse and a confession of specific sins you need to be cleansed of.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 7 | MARK 1:40-45 | DAY 2

BE CLEAN

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...he stretched out his hand and touched him... Mark 1:41

"Why did Jesus do this? He wanted the leper to *feel* his willingness and sympathy. The touch said, 'I'm with you, I understand, I love you.' Those are the human reasons. But there was also an overshadowing theological reason: the touch of Christ's pure hand on the rotting leper is a parable of the Incarnation. Jesus in the Incarnation took on flesh, became sin for us, and thus gave us his purity." - R. Kent Hughes (*Preaching the Word Commentary*)

About the touch of God.

God not only desires to heal us; He desires to heal us in a personal way! The ultimate expression of the personal nature in which God desires to relate to us is Jesus Christ! God put on flesh so that He could dwell among us!

Do you see God as a *Heavenly* Father who wants to relate to you in a *personal* way? Do you see God as One who is disgusted with you or as One who loves you and longs for you to feel His love? Do you feel like your past sins disqualify you from being "touched" by God?

In the same way that Jesus touched and healed the leper, Christ longs to heal you, love you, and relate to you in a personal way. Receive and embrace His love for you today!

Consider the questions above and write a prayerful response of praise and thanksgiving for the personal love that Christ is ready to give to you when you're ready and willing to receive it.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 7 | MARK 1:40-45 | DAY 3

BE CLEAN

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And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. Mark 1:42

"That is what Jesus Christ can do for you, for anyone in an instant, in a split second of belief. The healing of Christ in salvation from sin is *instantaneous* and *complete*. ('the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin,' (John 1:7)." - R. Kent Hughes (*Preaching the Word Commentary*)

About the *healing* of God.

Very few things in this world are both instantaneous *and* complete. Most things that are instantaneous aren't completed very well, and most things that are completed well, take a long time. Not so with the spiritual healing of Christ!

When we place our faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, our spiritual healing is automatic and finished. Though we will fight against the flesh to live righteously, we are *made* righteous in the sight of God in an instant... forever!

Have you received the instant and complete spiritual healing of God? When did this occur for you? When was the last time you praised God for the miracle of being spiritually healed?

Write a prayerful response of praise and thanksgiving for what God has done for you through Jesus. If you have yet to be made spiritually clean, through faith in Jesus, ask God to do this today. Your spiritual healing will be instant and complete!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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WEEK 7 | MARK 1:40-45 | DAY 4

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WEEK 7 | MARK 1:40-45 | DAY 5

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2. God we thank you because you have...
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WEEK 8

TRUE HEALING

MARK 2:1-12

WEEK 8 | MARK 2:1-12 | DAY 1

TRUE HEALING

And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. Mark 2:4

"So we see in the lives of the stretcher-bearers how Christ's healing power is unleashed in the world—through *love* and through *faith*. Oh, how they loved their helpless friend! Oh, how the world must be loved by us—truly loved! They *believed* Christ was the only way! Their belief wrought *persistence*, invincible determination. They would not be denied. It also brought *creativity*, so that they found a way. It was *sacrificial*, for it really cost them." - R. Kent Hughes (*Preaching the Word Commentary*)

Being healed by Christ was preceded by being loved by friends.

This paralytic had good friends. Friends who loved him with their strength. Friends who loved him with their ingenuity. Friends that loved him with their resolve to not let anything stop them from seeking healing for him. Without their practical expression of sacrificial love, their friend would not have been healed of his physical or his spiritual condition.

Who is this type of friend to you? Who are you this type of friend to? Who might God be calling you to sacrificially love, so that they might be healed?

Consider these questions and write a prayerful response praising your Heavenly Father for the friends in your life, and asking God for the strength to love others sacrificially.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 8 | MARK 2:1-12 | DAY 2

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**And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic,
"Son, your sins are forgiven." Mark 2:5**

"This is the things that no one but God can do. No angel in heaven, no person on earth, no church in council, no minister of any denomination, can take away from the sinner's conscience the load of guilt, and give him peace with God. They may point to the fountain open for all sin. They may declare with authority whose sins God is willing to forgive. But they cannot absolve by their own authority. They cannot put away transgressions. This is God's prerogative, and he has put it in the hands of his Son Jesus Christ." - J.C Ryle (*The Crossway Classic Commentaries*)

Forgiveness of sin is the work of Christ and Christ alone.

More than being physically healed, the paralytic needed to be spiritually healed. He needed to be healed from the sickness which is sin. This is the type of healing we ultimately need.

Have you received the forgiveness for your sins that faith in Jesus Christ provides? If so, what specific sins are you thankful to be forgiven of? What difference has being forgiven made in your life? What does Christ's forgiveness of your sins mean to you?

Consider these questions and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. If you haven't ever experienced the forgiveness of Jesus Christ, ask for it! It is available to you today!

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**But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority
on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—
"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." Mark 2:10-11**

"Jesus purposely waited to heal the paralyzed man until after he declared his authority to forgive sins. Disease and disability are consequences of living in a fallen world, meaning that sin's permeating effects are the root cause of all sickness and suffering. By healing the paralyzed man, in demonstration of His power over sin's effects, Jesus proved his authority over sin itself." - John MacArthur (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)

The paralytic's ability to walk verified Christ's power to forgive.

The forgiveness of Jesus Christ is *real*. It *actually* clears our debt to God. It *actually* is removed from our record. It *actually* becomes something we do not have to pay God back for.

The account of this paralytic's *physical* healing should build our confidence in Christ's *actual* forgiveness.

How would your relationship with God be strengthened if you were more convinced of the forgiveness you have received through faith in Jesus? How would your urgency to tell others about the forgiveness of Jesus Christ be impacted, if you had full confidence in Christ's power to forgive?

Consider the implications of Christ's actual forgiveness for your sins, and write a prayerful response of praise to your Heavenly Father.

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WEEK 8 | MARK 2:1-12 | DAY 4

TRUE HEALING

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2. God we thank you because you have...
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WEEK 9

SINNERS WELCOME

MARK 2:13-17

WEEK 9 | MARK 2:13-17 | DAY 1

SINNERS WELCOME

He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

...he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth... Mark 2:14a

"Levi (also known as Matthew in Matthew 9:9) was a tax collector. In that day, tax collectors were despised as traitors and extortioners. The Jewish people rightly considered them traitors because they worked for the Roman government and had the force of Roman soldiers behind them to make people pay taxes. They were the most visible Jewish collaborators with Rome." – David Guzik (*Mark - Verse by Verse Commentary*)

There is no sinner beyond saving.

Have you ever felt "not good enough" for Jesus? Maybe when you think about your past or maybe even your present you think to yourself, "There is just no way Jesus could want me." Well, the truth is, no matter how bad you think you are, you have not disqualified yourself from Jesus' love.

Levi, also known as Matthew, is a tax collector. Tax collectors in Jesus' days were some of the most hated individuals in the city because of their allegiance to the Roman empire. Culturally, they were despised and for good reason. They cheated people out of money and took extra for themselves to make themselves rich all the while supporting the ruthless Roman empire.

Despite Matthew's past and present ungodliness, Jesus "saw Levi" and said to him, "follow me."

Take heart friend, no matter your past and no matter your present, Jesus sees you and wants you. Your sin has not disqualified you from his love! In light of Christ's great love for you, write a prayerful response of thanksgiving and praise to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 9 | MARK 2:13-17 | DAY 2

SINNERS WELCOME

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...he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. Mark 2:14b

"With God, through Christ, there is mercy to pardon the greatest sins, and grace to sanctify the greatest sinners. Matthew, that had been a publican, became an evangelist, the first that put pen to paper, and the fullest in writing the life of Christ." – Matthew Henry

There is no sinner who can't become a Saint.

Jesus' invitation to Matthew is the same invitation to us, "Follow me." Matthew received the invitation, and we should respond the same way because when we do, we can have our lives transformed from the inside out.

Matthew was transformed from a cheating politician, who exploited people for his gain, to somebody willing to have his life taken for the sake of Christ. How does that happen? It only happens as we follow Jesus.

To follow Jesus means more than believing in Jesus; it means adopting his lifestyle and teachings into our lives. As we do this, we become more and more like Jesus and more like the people that God created us to be!

The choice of following Jesus is not simply a one-time decision we make in a church service; it is a moment-by-moment decision that we make daily, and as we do, the Spirit of God transforms us into Jesus' image (Romans 8:29)

Write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father thanking Him for how He has transformed your life from the inside-out!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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WEEK 9 | MARK 2:13-17 | DAY 3

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He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

"Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." Mark 2:17

"Jesus' answer was both simple and profound. Jesus was the *physician* of the soul, and it made sense for Him to be with those who were sick with sin. Jesus is the perfect doctor to heal us of our sin. He is always available. He always makes a perfect diagnosis. He provides a complete cure. He even pays the doctor's fee." – David Guzik (*Mark - Verse by Verse Commentary*)

Sickness is Christ's specialty.

Why do people go to the doctor? Number one, they have a problem that needs to be solved. Number two, they believe the doctor knows the solution to the problem and can provide the solution.

The Bible describes Jesus as the Great Physician. The reality for every single person on the planet is that we all have a problem. Our problem is that our sinful nature has separated us from God as well as broken our souls.

The Good News of the Bible also is that it declares Jesus as the one who can provide the solution to the deepest problem in our lives. This is why Jesus says, "I came not to call the righteous, but the sinners." Jesus is calling out to all of us who have the deadly sickness of sin.

So today, go visit the Great Physician, Jesus. He is ready to administer His healing power over your life!

Write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. Praise Him for your healing and ask Him to heal someone you know who is spiritually sick.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 9 | MARK 2:13-17 | DAY 4

SINNERS WELCOME

He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard it, he said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."

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Why is the phrase you chose most meaningful to you?

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WEEK 9 | MARK 2:13-17 | DAY 5

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Close your group time praying together using the scripture that we're studying and the following prayer prompts as a guide...

1. God we praise you because you are...
2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 10

ABOUT FASTING

MARK 2:18-22

WEEK 10 | MARK 2:18-22 | DAY 1

ABOUT FASTING

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. Mark 2:20

"If our fasting is not unto God, we have failed. Physical benefits, success in prayer, the ending with power, spiritual insights—these must never replace God as the center of our fasting." – Richard Foster

Fasting is a religious activity that had been around before Jesus' ministry, and this was evidenced by the fasting of the Pharisee's and John's disciples. People brought a critiquing question to Jesus about why his disciples didn't fast. Jesus responded with a story about a wedding and its guests. His point was simple: "My disciples don't fast because I am with them currently...But one day, I will not be physically present with them, and then they will fast."

What was Jesus teaching us about the spiritual practice of fasting? Very simply, he was teaching that the purpose of fasting is for his people to experience more of God as they await the second coming of Christ.

Do you want to experience more of God's presence in your life? If so, Jesus would invite you to practice the spiritual discipline of fasting from food. God must be the goal and center of our fasting, otherwise, we will fast for reasons different than what Jesus intended originally.

How might God be leading you to establish a rhythm of fasting? For what spiritual reason might God be calling you to abstain from eating food for a specific period of time? Consider these questions and write out a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 10 | MARK 2:18-22 | DAY 2

ABOUT FASTING

Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. And people came and said to him, "Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins."

The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day. Mark 2:20

"Fasting is a temporary renunciation of something that is in itself good, like food, in order to intensify our expression of need for something greater—namely, God and his work in our lives." – John Piper

There is a great danger in Christianity to love the gift more than the Giver. To love the blessing more than the Blesser. To love the creation rather than the Creator. This is at the heart of faulty religion. We end up using God to get what we really want, His gifts, not Himself.

Enter the discipline of fasting. Fasting is a practical way to train our bodies and our hearts to love the "Gift-Giver" more than His gifts. Fasting intensifies our need for something greater than just the good things God gives us in our lives. Food is great, but Jesus is better!

Do you desire to love Jesus from a purer and purer heart? If so, fasting is for you! You can join in with the former great king of Israel David when he said, "I humbled my soul with fasting" (Ps. 69:10). Jesus himself said that "The pure in heart shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Fasting is a way that God, through the Holy Spirit, will purify our hearts!

As you continue to consider engaging in the spiritual discipline of fasting and prayer, write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father praising Him for who He is, thanking Him for what He's done, and asking Him to give you the strength to engage in the discipline of fasting.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 10 | MARK 2:18-22 | DAY 3

ABOUT FASTING

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**And no one puts new wine into old wineskins.
If he does, the wine will burst the skins—and the wine is destroyed,
and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins. Mark 2:22**

"One of the meanings of Christian fasting is that we are expressing our hunger for the Lord Jesus to come back and to take up his kingship in this world. What sets Christian fasting apart as unique — new wine that can't fit into the old wineskins — is that Christ has already come. The Bridegroom, the King, has already been here. We have seen him and known him. We love him, because we have tasted of his presence. We have already tasted the presence of the kingship of Jesus." – John Piper

The following quote gets at the heart of why, as followers of Jesus, we fast. Pastor John Piper says, "Fasting is not a replacement for faith in Jesus. It is a servant of faith in Jesus. Fasting is a way of saying with our stomach and our whole body how much we need and want and trust Jesus. It is a way of saying that we are not going to be enslaved by food as the source of our satisfaction. We will use the renunciation of food from time to time to express that Jesus is better than food. Jesus is more needful than food."

Christ has come once and will come again! This is good news Christian! Today, why not take your lunch break, and instead of eating, spend it seeking the Lord in prayer. Ask, for "His kingdom to come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" His kingdom is here and is coming. We long for this day when all things will be made new.

Take a few moments to write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. Praise Him in anticipation of the day when He returns!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

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WEEK 10 | MARK 2:18-22 | DAY 4

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WEEK 10 | MARK 2:18-22 | DAY 5

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3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 11

A SABBATH SITUATION

MARK 2:23-28

WEEK 11 | MARK 2:23-28 | DAY 1

A SABBATH SITUATION

One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

"Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" Mark 2:24

"Over the centuries, as they did with so many God-given laws, the rabbis devoted themselves to fine-tuning the Sabbath laws and adding specific prohibitions to guard the observation of the Sabbath day. Their prohibitions included many details found nowhere in sacred Scripture, but their traditions eventually became as binding on the people's consciences as Scripture itself." - R.C. Sproul (*Mark: An Expository Commentary*)

We should be careful about being *loud* where the Scriptures are *silent*.

This was the tendency of the Pharisees, and it continues to be the tendency of religious people and many followers of Jesus Christ to this day—*having* deep convictions and *requiring others* to have deep convictions about matters the Scriptures do not provide reason for.

How do you need to be aware of this tendency in your own life? How do you make yourself feel guilty and weighed down about things God never meant for you to feel guilty and weighed down about. How do you make others feel guilty and weighed down by "extra-Biblical" ideals? How have you taken something in Scripture and taken it far beyond the original intent for why it was written? This was the Pharisees sin. Let's not make it ours!

Consider the questions above, and write out a thoughtful, prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. In doing so, may He set you free from the shackles of religion that Jesus Christ died to set us free from!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 11 | MARK 2:23-28 | DAY 2

A SABBATH SITUATION

One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Mark 2:27

"God made it for Adam in the paradise, and renewed it to Israel on Mount Sinai. It was made for all mankind, not for the Jew only, but for the whole family of Adam. It was made for human benefit and happiness. It was for the good of their souls. It was given as a boon and a blessing, and not a burden. This was the original institution." - J.C. Ryle (*The Crossway Classic Commentaries*)

The Sabbath is a gift to enjoy not a curse to endure.

A day has been given to us, by God, for rest, relaxation, and refreshing! From the beginning of time, a healthy rhythm of work and rest has been established by God for our flourishing and God's glory. A day to cease from *all* of our toil and enjoy the gifts and the presence of God in an intentional way.

How are you doing with enjoying this gift that was made for you? Do you take a day to rest? Do you have a rhythm of taking a 24-hour period, once a week, to put your work down so you can replenish your soul with activities that renew and recharge you?

If you don't embrace this gift that God created for you, why not? How could you be missing out on God's best for your life by neglecting to enjoy this gift? What might God desire to do in and through you, if you more routinely rested?

Consider the questions above. Think about their implications. Then, write a prayerful response of praise and petition to your Heavenly Father. He's worthy!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

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WEEK 11 | MARK 2:23-28 | DAY 3

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So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath. Mark 2:28

"The Pharisees prided themselves on being the authoritative interpreters of God's Word and will. In their midst stood the One whose interpretation was infinitely more authoritative: the Son of God Himself." - John MacArthur (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)

Jesus rules over His rules!

Jesus, alone, determines what is right and wrong. Jesus, alone, determines what is lawful and what is sinful. Jesus, alone, determines the extent to which His law needs to be applied or not applied. Jesus is Lord, not just over the Sabbath but over *all* things.

Jesus is Lord over our health. Jesus is Lord over our relationships. Jesus is Lord over our finances. Jesus is Lord over our ambitions. Jesus is Lord over our fears. Jesus is Lord over our inadequacies. Jesus is Lord over our city, our nation, and our world. Jesus is Lord, King, Master, and Ruler over *all*!

Is Jesus *your* Lord? *How* is Jesus your Lord? *What* does Jesus being Lord look like in your life? *Where* do you need to acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus in your life in a deeper way?

Consider these very important questions about the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and write a prayerful response of praise and petition to your Heavenly Father!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

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WEEK 11 | MARK 2:23-28 | DAY 4

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WEEK 11 | MARK 2:23-28 | DAY 5

A SABBATH SITUATION

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2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 12

THE HEART OF JESUS

MARK 3:1-6

WEEK 12 | MARK 3:1-6 | DAY 1

THE HEART OF JESUS

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. Mark 3:3-4

"Jesus was not asking, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do what the rabbis permit?' but, 'Is it ok to do good?' His point was that good things may be done not just six days a week but seven days a week." -R.C. Sproul (*Mark: An Expositional Commentary*)

A Servant Heart

Jesus' words in Matthew 20:28 were radical. He said, "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." These words were in direct opposition to the perspective of the religious leaders of the day. In today's key verses, we see the Pharisees being full of pride because they followed all the rules. Jesus was full of compassion because He cared about the people He came to serve.

Today's key verses provide two contrasting ways to live. On one hand, the Pharisees were defined by religious rule-keeping because they believed it was pleasing to God. On the other hand, Jesus, God in the flesh, revealed that what is really on God's heart is not religious activity; it is a relationship with people. Consider how you spend your time, energy, and resources. Is your life consumed with attempting to keep all the rules, even if it means ignoring the needs of people? Jesus' heart was, is, and will always be for people.

Write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father, in light of these thoughts on Jesus' servant heart.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 12 | MARK 3:1-6 | DAY 2

THE HEART OF JESUS

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

**And he looked around at them with anger,
grieved at their hardness of heart... Mark 3:5a**

"Jesus' anger is a description of righteous indignation. The greatest enemy to divine love and justice is not opposition, not even malice, but hardness of heart and indifference to divine grace. To which not even disciples of Jesus are immune." –James Edwards (*The Gospel According to Mark*)

A Soft Heart

When a person's heart becomes numb to the voice of God and the activity of God, they are in a dangerous place. In today's key verse, Jesus is frustrated and saddened by the hearts of the Pharisees because He knew they had grown cold. Constant exposure to the truth without a humble response leads to a hard heart. The Pharisees knew the commands of God but had not been transformed by them.

Especially in America, we are all in danger of being overly exposed to the truth without responding in genuine humility and obedience. We have church services, Christian books, conferences, podcasts, and the list goes on and on. As you sit before the Lord today, ask Him to reveal if your heart has grown hard to His voice and activity.

After considering the condition of your heart, invest the next few minutes reflecting and writing a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 12 | MARK 3:1-6 | DAY 3

THE HEART OF JESUS

Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. And he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

"Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

Mark 3:5b

"A buzz of excitement must have shot through the congregation, most of whom would have known the man with the withered hand. Not only were they amazed at Jesus' preaching and His willingness to openly defy the Pharisees, but He also performed undeniable miracles." –John MacArthur (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary*)

A Caring Heart

In response to crowds, opposition, scrutiny, and hatred, Jesus chose not to react in emotion or become defensive. He remained focused on the mission He was sent to accomplish. In a hectic moment, a man stood before Him with a physical need, and Jesus cared enough to give him attention. He did not overlook him. He did what the man had been yearning for; He healed him.

There are many things Jesus could have done during this story, but instead, He noticed and healed a man rather than overlooking him. Jesus chose to do for him what he could not do for himself.

You may feel unnoticed and have needs that appear overlooked. Let this story serve as a reminder that Jesus sees you and can do for you what you cannot do for yourself. Jesus cares specifically for you.

Take a moment to write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father, thanking Him for specific ways you have felt His loving care for you through the years. Then, ask God to care for specific areas of your life that you currently require His love and attention.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 12 | MARK 3:1-6 | DAY 4

THE HEART OF JESUS

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After reading the above passage, at least 3 times slowly and prayerfully, write out the phrase from this passage that is most meaningful to you...

Why is the phrase you chose most meaningful to you?

What step of obedience is the Holy Spirit of God leading you to take in light of what God is revealing to you in His Word?

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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WEEK 12 | MARK 3:1-6 | DAY 5

THE HEART OF JESUS

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**Read the text aloud in your group 2-3 times.
Then, discuss the following questions together.**

1. What part of this text is most significant to you and why?
2. What part of this weekend's message about the text was the most significant to you and why?
3. What is one characteristic you discover about Jesus from the text?
4. How is what you heard or learned going to affect how you live?
5. What next step is the Holy Spirit leading you to take in light of what we have read and discussed?

Close your group time praying together using the scripture that we're studying and the following prayer prompts as a guide...

1. God we praise you because you are...
2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 13

CRUSHING CROWDS

MARK 3:7-12

WEEK 13 | MARK 3:7-12 | DAY 1

CRUSHING CROWDS

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

...a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon.

Mark 3:7-8

"This ethnic mix is appropriate since the kingdom of God is to be made up of people from every tribe and nation around the world. Jesus would consistently affirm such diversity and would even command it in His Great Commission." – Daniel L. Akin (*Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*)

A Diverse Crowd

The ministry of Jesus attracted people of various ethnic backgrounds. Why? Because the healing power of God transcends race, ethnicity, and cultural upbringing. *Everyone* needs what Jesus has to offer!

How does the multi-ethnic reach of Jesus impact your faith? Do you love people, serve people, relate to people, and share the good news with people who look and have backgrounds different from you? Do you have a Revelation 7:9 vision of the Kingdom of God?

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (Revelation 7:9)

In light of this multi-ethnic vision of the Kingdom of God, write a prayerful response of praise and petition to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

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And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. Mark 3:9-10

"While He was moved by compassion to heal the sick, cleanse those with leprosy, and cast out demons, He came for a greater purpose: to proclaim the gospel. As soon as healing began to infringe and compromise His preaching ministry, He made adjustments. When the crush around Him became too restrictive, He climbed aboard a boat...Many leaders crave attention and could never have too many followers, but Jesus maintained a careful balance between popularity and effectiveness." – Charles R. Swindoll (*Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary on Mark*)

An Imposing Crowd

Crowding. Crushing. Pressing. Imposing. These were the characteristics of the crowds that desired the healing touch of Jesus.

Focused. Undeterred. Prepared. Wise. These were the characteristics of Jesus as He dealt with the crowds desiring His healing touch.

How are you handling the demands and expectations that people have of you? Are you giving in to others' needs at the expense of God's call on your life? How might you need to "get away" from the "crowds" that impose on you? Do you struggle with the tension between popularity and effectiveness?

Consider these questions and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. Praise Jesus for His mission-focused life, and ask Jesus to live His mission-focused life *through* you!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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And he strictly ordered them not to make him known. Mark 3:12

"Jesus wanted His followers to receive Him as the Son of God, but not on the testimony of demons. Furthermore, He had a carefully programmed message that progressively revealed truth according to a schedule. Therefore, He wouldn't allow demons to continue calling Him the Son of God." –Charles R. Swindoll (*Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary on Mark*)

An Authoritative Christ

Jesus would not allow the revelation of who He was to happen before it was time. Jesus had a plan. Jesus had a process. Jesus had a will.

Are you submitted to the timing, plan, process, and will of God for your life? Are there any areas of your life where you know you are trying to "get ahead" of God? Are there areas in your life where God is requiring you to be patient, but you are refusing to wait?

Trust in the Lord! Trust His timing. Trust His will. Trust His way. Submit to His authority. Where God has told you to wait...wait. Where God has told you stop...stop. To disobey, will only lead to pain and heartache later down the line.

Consider these thoughts and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. Praise God for His perfect timing, and ask Him to give you the humility to submit to His will.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 13 | MARK 3:7-12 | DAY 4

CRUSHING CROWDS

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WEEK 13 | MARK 3:7-12 | DAY 5

CRUSHING CROWDS

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

**Read the text aloud in your group 2-3 times.
Then, discuss the following questions together.**

1. What part of this text is most significant to you and why?
2. What part of this weekend's message about the text was the most significant to you and why?
3. What is one characteristic you discover about Jesus from the text?
4. How is what you heard or learned going to affect how you live?
5. What next step is the Holy Spirit leading you to take in light of what we have read and discussed?

Close your group time praying together using the scripture that we're studying and the following prayer prompts as a guide...

1. God we praise you because you are...
2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 14

THE TWELVE

MARK 3:13-19

THE TWELVE

And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. Mark 3:7

“In one sense, there was nothing in Jesus’ three years of ministry before the cross more important than this. These were the men who would carry on what He started; without them the work of Jesus would never extend throughout the whole world. Therefore, He made the choice with God’s wisdom: He called to Him those He Himself wanted.” – David Guzik

This is a critical moment in the ministry of Jesus. He is spending time in prayer with his Father to determine who He was going to choose to carry on the mission of the Kingdom. Here is something worth noting about this verse, “He called to him those *whom he desired*”. What is clear from this passage is that for the original twelve disciples, Jesus wanted them.

Jesus wanted them despite their pasts. Jesus wanted them despite their inability to fulfill, in their own strength, what he was calling them to do. Jesus wanted them despite their current sins struggles. Jesus wanted them. But here’s the crazy thing...Jesus wants you too!

You, the present struggler with consistent sin. You, the person skeptical of all this “religion stuff”. You, the one who knows their heart for God isn’t what it “should” be. Yes, you! Don’t believe me, look at this verse, 1 Timothy 2:3-4 says, “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Jesus desires you the same way He desired those original twelve. The only question is, are you going to come to Him? Come to Jesus today by writing a prayerful response of praise and thanksgiving to your Heavenly Father for *wanting* you!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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**And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles)
so that they might be with him... Mark 3:14a**

"The primary call on your life is not working for God, but being with God."
– Vance Pitman

The quote mentioned above from Pastor Vance Pitman has transformed my life. So often in church life, it can seem that what God wants most from us is our lives in service to Him, as if he needs us. But the Bible is clear, God is not in need of us; we need Him!

Another way to rephrase the quote from Pastor Vance is that the primary call of God on your life isn't to love God, it's to be loved by God! This why John in 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us." The only way we can love God rightly is by first experiencing His love for us!

The primary way that you experience God's love for you daily is by being with Jesus or by "spending time in his presence." We do this through prayer and His word.

So be encouraged today. Before anything else God wants you to be with Him. Pursue His presence, now, by writing a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father who wants you to be *with* Him more than He wants you to do anything for Him.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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WEEK 14 | MARK 3:13-19 | DAY 3

THE TWELVE

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...and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. Mark 3:14b

“A preacher will only be as useful to Jesus to the extent that He has “been with” Jesus. There is little done for eternal good by those who preach without having a real, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” – David Guzik

Notice again the order of Jesus’ call to his disciples. First, He invites them to be with Him. This was a calling to spend time with Him. To watch and learn from Him. To become like Him. Then, and only then, does he send out his apostles on mission.

Pastor Vance Pitman says it this way, “Ministry is the overflow of our intimacy with Jesus.” Ministry or mission is what the Holy Spirit does through us as we pursue Him! This is the way we have the “authority” that Jesus gave His original disciples. We don’t possess this kind of spiritual authority in and of ourselves, but only through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Where is Jesus inviting you to step out into his kingdom mission today? Is there someone you need to call to encourage? Someone you need to pray for? Someone you need to share the love of Jesus with today? Be strengthened friend, you have the authority of Jesus in you to do this!

Consider these questions and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

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WEEK 14 | MARK 3:13-19 | DAY 4

THE TWELVE

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WEEK 14 | MARK 3:13-19 | DAY 5

THE TWELVE

And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

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2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 15

UNPARDONABLE SIN

MARK 3:20-30

WEEK 15 | MARK 3:20-30 | DAY 1

UNPARDONABLE SIN

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

"He is out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." Mark 3:21-22

"This unpardonable sin is characterized by consistently rejecting the obvious and logical conclusion that these spiritual works are done by the Spirit of God. Instead, those guilty will declare verbally and consistently that these spiritual works are actually from Satan. Such actions reveal a hardened heart that calls evil good and that will not celebrate the works of God in Christ. Anyone who continues down this road will never be forgiven by God."

– Daniel L. Akin (*Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*)

Do you reject the miracles of God and call them works of Satan? Do you see God saving souls, renewing lives, and reconciling relationships and fail to believe that these are works of God and celebrate them? A continuous unwillingness to see the works of God, as the work of God, is a sin that must be repented of, or in the end, it will lead to your destruction.

Consider these thoughts and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. If you know someone who refuses to acknowledge God as God, invest some time today praying for their salvation!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 15 | MARK 3:20-30 | DAY 2

UNPARDONABLE SIN

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

Mark 3:27

"Jesus gives a parable. Satan is the 'strong man,' and Jesus is the One breaking into his house, his realm, to bind and plunder. Satan is indeed a strong man in this world. His house is a house of horrors, filled with sin, sickness, death, demon possession, and all that is evil and wicked. His possessions are human beings, enslaved by all these evils. Demons are his agents who delight in carrying out his diabolical agenda. No one but Jesus can invade his realm and carry away his possessions. No one but Jesus is more powerful than this strongman." – Daniel L. Akin (*Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*)

In what areas do you sense Satan coming against you? What lies are you believing? Which family members seem to be distracted by his schemes? In what areas of your life do you feel defeated and find yourself unable to overcome? Where is there spiritual opposition and warfare in your life?

Invest some time considering these questions. Then, write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father, calling on the name of Jesus, to deliver, rescue, defeat, and overtake the "strongman." Jesus is the only one who can. Call on His name in desperation and dependence today!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 15 | MARK 3:20-30 | DAY 3

UNPARDONABLE SIN

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

"...whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin..." Mark 3:29

"The unpardonable sin is to *knowingly, willingly, and persistently* attribute to Satan the works of God done by and in Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit, who testifies to these truths in your heart. (1) It is a sin of full knowledge. (2) It is an ongoing disposition of the heart that resists the conviction of the Holy Spirit. (3) It is a verbal act that attributes the words of the Holy Spirit to Satan. (4) It is a willful rejection of God's grace in Jesus. (5) It is rooted in unbelief. (6) It is a sin a Christian cannot commit. (7) It is a sin not committed by one who is concerned that he may have committed it." – Daniel L. Akin (*Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*)

This is serious business—to continually resist and reject the conviction of the Holy Spirit. To have so much pride that you, over and over again, reject the grace of God. What a scary and dangerous place to be!

Praise God for giving you the humility to receive the grace of God. Praise God for opening up your eyes to His love. Praise God for His grace.

Again, pray a prayer for your loved ones who are currently rejecting God. Pray that God would reveal His love to them just as He revealed His love to you. Pray passionately for people in your life who, if they do not repent of their sin, will not experience the forgiveness and grace of God!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 15 | MARK 3:20-30 | DAY 4

UNPARDONABLE SIN

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

After reading the above passage, at least 3 times slowly and prayerfully, write out the phrase from this passage that is most meaningful to you...

Why is the phrase you chose most meaningful to you?

What step of obedience is the Holy Spirit of God leading you to take in light of what God is revealing to you in His Word?

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 15 | MARK 3:20-30 | DAY 1

UNPARDONABLE SIN

Then he went home, and the crowd gathered again, so that they could not even eat. And when his family heard it, they went out to seize him, for they were saying, "He is out of his mind." And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem were saying, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house. "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin"— for they were saying, "He has an unclean spirit."

**Read the text aloud in your group 2-3 times.
Then, discuss the following questions together.**

1. What part of this text is most significant to you and why?
2. What part of this weekend's message about the text was the most significant to you and why?
3. What is one characteristic you discover about Jesus from the text?
4. How is what you heard or learned going to affect how you live?
5. What next step is the Holy Spirit leading you to take in light of what we have read and discussed?

Close your group time praying together using the scripture that we're studying and the following prayer prompts as a guide...

1. God we praise you because you are...
2. God we thank you because you have...
3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...

WEEK 16

FAMILY BUSINESS

MARK 3:31-35

WEEK 16 | MARK 3:31-35 | DAY 1

FAMILY BUSINESS

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

"Who are my mother and my brothers?" Mark 3:33

"Jesus makes a decisive and comprehensive statement on true Christian discipleship. Such discipleship involves a spiritual relationship that transcends the physical family and is open to all who are empowered by the spirit of God." John McArthur

Defining the family of God.

Jesus draws a line in the sand with this stark question, informing his biological family that they can no longer lay claim on him for He belongs to another family—the family of God!

In this statement, not only does Jesus identify Himself with being in the family of God, He is also making a point about the *priority* of the family of God.

How often do you think of the blessing of being in the family of God? Do you identify primarily with your family of origin or the family of God you were "born again" into when you placed your faith in Jesus as Lord? How do you prioritize loving and serving the family of God?

Consider the questions above, and write out a thoughtful, prayerful response to your Heavenly Father. Praise Him for the privilege of being in the family of God!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 16 | MARK 3:31-35 | DAY 2

FAMILY BUSINESS

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

"Here are my mother and my brothers!" Mark 3:34

"In the body of Christ, God blesses us with many brothers, sisters, fathers, and mothers — all dear loved ones whose spiritual bond with us will never be severed." Mark Jones

Introducing the family of God.

In Jesus's statement, He shows the paradox of the Gospel. Normally, our biological family is closer to us than our friends and associates, but not so much in the family of God. Spiritual kinship is stronger than biological kinship; it's here that Jesus redefines family.

Take a few moments to think through this reality. Does this change how you view the church of Jesus Christ? Think about how this should change your interaction with other Jesus followers.

Have you ever looked at the family of God as being closer than your biological family? What obstacles do you think you will face as you begin living this out? What are the implications on Jesus' definition of family for how you should relate to other Jesus followers that are not of the same ethnic background as you are?

With all the ethnic and racial division in our world today, how could Jesus' definition of family bring supernatural unity in the midst of diversity?

Consider these questions, and write a prayerful response to your Heavenly Father.

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

God I praise you because you are (list out the characteristics of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 16 | MARK 3:31-35 | DAY 3

FAMILY BUSINESS

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

"For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

Mark 3:35

"Jesus prioritized his relationship with those who submit themselves to God's will. If you want to experience more of Jesus and have a deeper relationship with him, respond to God's agenda for your life." Tony Evans

Those who do the will of God are in the family of God.

Jesus makes it extremely clear. The only people He acknowledges, as family, are those who love to obey God. While you may have a historical tie to your biological family, it is not closer nor deeper than the spiritual tie you have with those who believe God and do his will. This is the true family of God.

Are you currently obeying the will of God for your life? What was the last thing the Holy Spirit of God led you to do? Forgive someone? Serve someone? Express gratitude? Live generously? Share the Gospel?

As our study of Mark 1-3 comes to a close, look back on this devotional and the prayers and thoughts you have journaled. In light of all you have read, studied, and considered, what is the *one thing* God has made clear to you about His will for your life?

Write a prayerful response of gratitude and praise to your Heavenly Father for all He revealed to you about Himself through this study. Also, ask God for strength and power to obey His will!

PRAYERFUL RESPONSE

Heavenly Father,

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God I thank you because you have (list out the blessings of God that you find yourself particularly thankful for today)...

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WEEK 16 | MARK 3:31-35 | DAY 4

FAMILY BUSINESS

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

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What step of obedience is the Holy Spirit of God leading you to take in light of what God is revealing to you in His Word?

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God I depend on you and ask for help and power for (write out some of the areas where you currently need God's strength, wisdom, provision, or forgiveness)...

WEEK 16 | MARK 3:31-35 | DAY 5

FAMILY BUSINESS

And his mother and his brothers came, and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting around him, and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, seeking you." And he answered them, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother."

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3. God we depend on you and ask for your help and power for...



HOPE
CHURCH