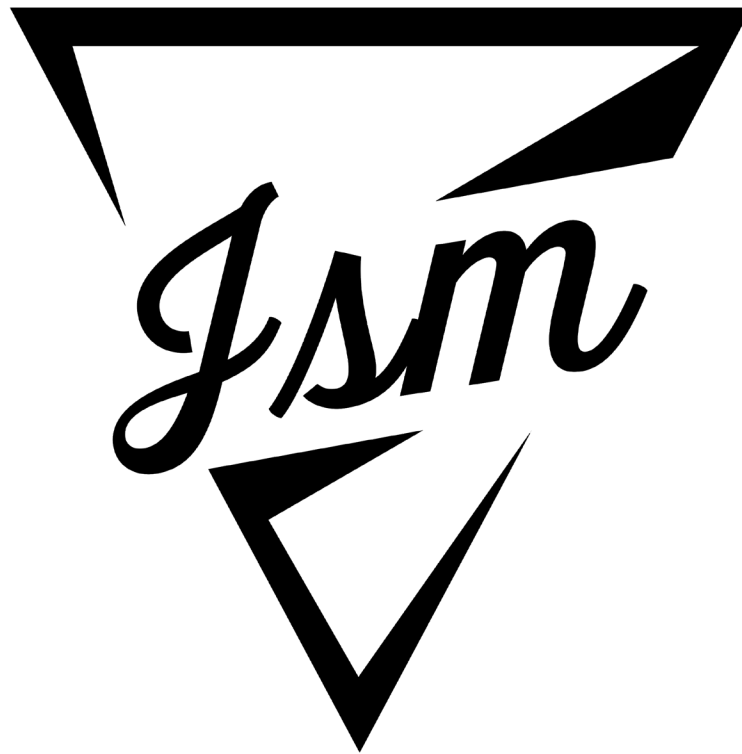


GOSPEL OF MARK

JOURNEY STUDENT MINISTRIES

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE



PROCESS

1 PRAY

Ask God to speak through His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the text and apply it to your life!

2 READ THE TEXT

Read through the text slowly and carefully. Pay attention to the details, notice the people, places, language and overall themes in the scripture.

3 TALK IT OVER/WRITE IT DOWN

What stands out to you? What makes you think? What questions do you have after reading the text?

4 READ A DIFFERENT TRANSLATION

Read the passage a second time, but in a different translation. Sometimes it can be helpful to utilize a paraphrase translation, like the Message Translation, because it can help us understand the heart of the passage instead of just logical side.

5 CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

Who is the author? Who was his intended audience? When was the book written? What is the book about? What is happening in the verses before and after those you are reading? Who are the key players in the text? What cultural influences might be impactful to the text?

6 CONSULT THE COMMENTARY

Read the experts. Many theologians have dedicated their life's work to studying the bible. Glean from their learning and insights. Learn from the historical and literary critical analysis of the text. This can be the key to shed light of the texts that confuse us or that we might be prone to misinterpret and abuse.

7 DISCUSS THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPALS

What timeless principles are taught in this passage? The meaning of a passage will be applied differently at different times and in different places, but the underlying truths of Scripture will be applicable in some way at all times and places. Before we can apply a passage, we must understand its theological principals.

8 APPLY THE TEXT

How do you feel God speaking to you through this passage? What area of your life is the passage speaking to? What did you learn, and how does it impact your understanding of who God is and who you are? How can you live in light of that?

PRAY

The Lords Prayer -
Matthew 6:9-13

but deliver us from
evil,
for thine is the
kingdom and the
power
and the glory,
forever. Amen.

Our Father, who art
in heaven,
hallowed be thy
name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in
heaven.

Give us this day our
daily bread
and forgive us
our debts and we
forgive
our debtors,
and lead us not
into temptation,

#youbelonghere

READ THE TEXT

Mark 4:1-20 NIV

4 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. 2 He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: 3 "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times." 9 Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." 10 When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. 11 He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables 12 so that, "they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" 13 Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? 14 The farmer sows the word. 15 Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. 16 Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. 17 But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. 18 Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; 19 but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. 20 Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."

TALK IT OVER/ WRITE IT DOWN

Mark 4:1-20

What stands out to you?

What makes you think?

What questions do you have after reading the text?

How does the text make you feel?



A series of 20 horizontal lines for writing, arranged in a single column.

READ A DIFFERENT TRANSLATION

Mark 4:1-20 The Message

4 1-2 He went back to teaching by the sea. A crowd built up to such a great size that he had to get into an offshore boat, using the boat as a pulpit as the people pushed to the water's edge. He taught by using stories, many stories. 3-8 "Listen. What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled among the weeds and nothing came of it. Some fell on good earth and came up with a flourish, producing a harvest exceeding his wildest dreams. 9 "Are you listening to this? Really listening?" 10-12 When they were off by themselves, those who were close to him, along with the Twelve, asked about the stories. He told them, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom—you know how it works. But to those who can't see it yet, everything comes in stories, creating readiness, nudging them toward a welcome awakening. These are people— Whose eyes are open but don't see a thing, Whose ears are open but don't understand a word, Who avoid making an about-face and getting forgiven." 13 He continued, "Do you see how this story works? All my stories work this way. 14-15 "The farmer plants the Word. Some people are like the seed that falls on the hardened soil of the road. No sooner do they hear the Word than Satan snatches away what has been planted in them. 16-17 "And some are like the seed that lands in the gravel. When they first hear the Word, they respond with great enthusiasm. But there is such shallow soil of character that when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it. 18-19 "The seed cast in the weeds represents the ones who hear the kingdom news but are overwhelmed with worries about all the things they have to do and all the things they want to get. The stress strangles what they heard, and nothing comes of it. 20 "But the seed planted in the good earth represents those who hear the Word, embrace it, and produce a harvest beyond their wildest dreams."

CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT

Context determines
meaning

Every passage of scripture was God's word to other people before it became God's word to us. In order to properly and fully understand a text we must determine what the original author intended to communicate to their original audience. If we come up with an application that would have been foreign to the original audience, there is a very strong possibility that we did not interpret the passage correctly. Once we are confident that we understand what the text meant to its original hearers, we then need to determine the width of the chasm between us and them. In other words, what are the differences in language, time, culture, geography, setting and situation? All of these must be taken into account before application can be made. Once the width of the chasm has been measured, we can then attempt to build the bridge over the chasm by finding the commonalities between the original audience and ourselves. Finally, we can then find application for ourselves in our time and situation.

The Gospel According to Mark

Author: Unknown

- Like the other 3 Gospels, the Gospel of Mark nowhere identifies its author.
- Church tradition attributes this book to John Mark.
- John Mark was not an apostle, but early writings talk of John Mark as a faithful interpreter of the testimony of the apostle Peter.

Date Written: Unknown

- Nowhere in the Gospel is any specific information given by which it could be dated.
- Historical and textual analysis brings many theologians to believe the book was composed around the year A.D. 65. Making it the first of the Gospels to be written.

Audience and location: Greek Gentiles in Rome

- Church tradition and literary analysis hold that Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome
- Mark rarely quotes the OT, and he explains Jewish customs unfamiliar to his readers.
- Primary audience would have been unfamiliar with the Jewish ethos of Jesus.

Narrative Structure: Mark falls naturally into two halves, the first concerning Jesus' ministry in Galilee (1:1–8:26), and the second his journey to Jerusalem and his passion there (8:27–16:8).

CONSULT THE COMMENTARY

Pillar New Testament Commentary

Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI;

Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.

The center of the sandwich in vv. 10–13 is the key to understanding the whole, that only in fellowship with Jesus do parables disclose the meaning of the kingdom of God.

The Gospels record some sixty different parables of Jesus, most of which are found in Matthew and Luke, fewer in Mark, and none in John. The word “parable” means something that is placed alongside something else for the purpose of clarification. The most common subject of Jesus’ parables is the kingdom of God, which he illustrated by episodes from everyday life—fishing and farming, housekeeping and family life, royalty and banquets. Jesus’ parables required of his hearers no special knowledge or vocabulary to understand. Parables may reflect daily life, but they are not simple and easily understood. Many of Jesus’ parables are confounding,

knocking hearers off balance so that that they must see things in a new light.

An allegory can be understood from the “outside,” but parables can be understood only from within, by allowing oneself to be taken into the story and hearing who God is and what humans may become. Parables are like stained glass windows in a cathedral, dull and lifeless from the outside but brilliant and radiant from within. Or to borrow an analogy from Jesus (1:17), they are like fishing. There is a hook hidden in the bait. The hook is the word of God, which is personified in Jesus. Parables cannot be understood apart from the one who tells them. Parables are not simply good advice, they are good news; for the life of Jesus is itself a parable, indeed the greatest parable.

The parable represents the historical inbreaking of God’s kingdom in Jesus, the sower of the gospel. The astounding harvest in v. 8 is an important clue that the growth is not owing to human activity but to God’s providential power. God is at work—hidden and unobserved—in Jesus and the gospel to produce a yield wholly disproportionate to human prospects and merit.

COMMENTARY CONTINUED

Pillar New Testament Commentary

Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark*. Grand Rapids, MI;

Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.

The framing of the parable of the sower in vv. 3 and 9 by the Greek word *akouō* indicates that only one thing remains for disciples to do: to hear! Discipleship is not what we can make of ourselves, but allowing both the Sower and the seed to produce a harvest of which we alone are incapable.

The mystery in v. 11 is the point of the parable of the sower—that the providence of God is effective in Jesus to produce a fruitful harvest in the world.

Insiders are those for whom the fellowship and will of Jesus take precedence over everything else (so 3:14–15, 34–35). They “hear, believe, and bear fruit” (4:20), which is Mark’s definition of faith. They can hear only by being with Jesus, and to them the mystery is revealed.

The sense of 4:11–12 is that Jesus’ parables confirm the states of people’s hearts: insiders who are with Jesus will be given the understanding of the mystery, and outsiders who are not with Jesus will be confirmed in their disbelief.

Mark is unwilling to relax the tension between divine sovereignty and human free will in the accomplishment of God’s will.

The first telling of the parable in 4:3–9 explains the meaning of Jesus, and the second telling in 4:14–20 explains the meaning of discipleship.

The parable of the sower is like the cloud that separated the fleeing Israelites from the pursuing Egyptians, bringing “darkness to the one side and light to the other” (Exod 14:20). That which was blindness to Egypt was revelation to Israel. The same event was either a vehicle of light or of darkness, depending on one’s stance with God. The parable of the sower holds Christology and discipleship in symbiotic union, just as Mark will again hold them in union in the teaching at Caesarea Philippi (8:27–38). Right confession of Jesus leads to right discipleship.

APPLY THE TEXT

What is God's invitation
to you in this passage?



A series of 18 horizontal lines, evenly spaced, intended for writing a response to the question above.

