



The Gospel of Mark

***A Study Curriculum for Granville Chapel Home Groups
Winter 1999***

Study Schedule

The studies in this Curriculum should be done in the Home Groups before the Sunday sermon on the same topic. The schedule of studies for this Curriculum is as follows:

Week of

Dec. 28	Study #1	Mark 1:9-45	The Beginnings of Jesus' Ministry
January 4	Study #2	Mark 2:1-12	Jesus Heals a Paralytic
January 11	Study #3	Mark 2:23-3:6	Lord of the Sabbath
January 18	Study #4	Mark 4:1-20	The Parable of the Sower
January 25	Study #5	Mark 5:1-20	The Healing of a Demon Possessed Man
February 1	Study #6	Mark 6:6b-13	Jesus Sends out the Twelve
February 8	Study #7	Mark 7:1-23	Clean and Unclean
February 15	Study #8	Mark 8:27-33	"You are the Christ"
February 22	Study #9	Mark 9:2-13	The Transfiguration
March 1	Study #10	Mark 10:17-31	The Rich Young Man
March 8	Study #11	Mark 11:1-33	The Authority of Jesus
March 15	Study #12	Mark 12:28-34	The Greatest Commandment
March 22	Study #13	Mark 14:1-15:47	The Cross
March 29	Study #14	Mark 16:1-8	The Resurrection
April 5	Study #15	Mark 16:9-20	Preach the Good News to All Creation
April 12	Study #16	Mark 13:1-37	Signs of the End of the Age

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You are invited to use the following ...

Daily Bible Reading Guide.

Every Monday you will read a new chapter of Mark, asking yourself: What stands out to me at this first reading?

Every Sunday you will re-read the same chapter, asking yourself: What response is called for from me (thanksgiving, praise, repentance, action, prayer, etc.)?

On the week-days in between you will read through the whole story of Jesus in each of the other 3 Gospels and start into the Book of Acts.

(You might want to keep a journal to record your thoughts as you go.)

January

1 **Mark 1**
2 Matthew 1
3 **Mark 1**

4 **Mark 2**
5 Matthew 2
6 Matthew 3
7 Matthew 4
8 Matthew 5
9 Matthew 6
10 **Mark 2**

11 **Mark 3**
12 Matthew 7
13 Matthew 8
14 Matthew 9
15 Matthew 10
16 Matthew 11
17 **Mark 3**

18 **Mark 4**
19 Matthew 12
20 Matthew 13
21 Matthew 14
22 Matthew 15
23 Matthew 16

24 **Mark 4**

25 **Mark 5**
26 Matthew 17
27 Matthew 18
28 Matthew 19
29 Matthew 20
30 Matthew 21
31 **Mark 5**

February

1 **Mark 6**
2 Matthew 22
3 Matthew 23
4 Matthew 24
5 Matthew 25
6 Matthew 26
7 **Mark 6**

8 **Mark 7**
9 Matthew 27
10 Matthew 28
11 Luke 1
12 Luke 2
13 Luke 3
14 **Mark 7**

15 **Mark 8**
16 Luke 4
17 Luke 5
18 Luke 6
19 Luke 7
20 Luke 8
21 **Mark 8**

22 **Mark 9**
23 Luke 9
24 Luke 10
25 Luke 11
26 Luke 12
27 Luke 13
28 **Mark 9**

March

1 **Mark 10**
2 Luke 14
3 Luke 15
4 Luke 16
5 Luke 17
6 Luke 18
7 **Mark 10**

8 **Mark 11**
9 Luke 19
10 Luke 20
11 Luke 21
12 Luke 22
13 Luke 23
14 **Mark 11**

15 **Mark 12**
16 Luke 24
17 John 1
18 John 2
19 John 3
20 John 4
21 **Mark 12**

22 **Mark 14**
23 John 5
24 John 6
25 John 7
26 John 8
27 John 9
28 **Mark 14**

29 **Mark 15**
30 John 10
31 John 11
April 1 John 12
2 John 13
3 John 14
4 **Mark 15**

5 **Mark 16**
6 John 15
7 John 16
8 John 17
9 John 18
10 John 19
11 **Mark 16**

12 **Mark 13**
13 John 20
14 John 21
15 Acts 1
16 Acts 2
17 Acts 3
18 **Mark 13**

*We'll pick up Mark 13 later - we skip now to
Mark 14-16 to coincide with Holy Week.*



Study #1

The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry

Mark 1:9-45

Introduction

The very first verse reflects the style and intent of Mark's gospel. Like a reflection of Peter's preaching, the style is straight to the point, active, impulsive, and quick in movement. This book is about Jesus as "the Son of God". There are no lists of genealogies to prove his pedigree, not a preamble of historical referencing to ease into the concept. There it is, boom! Jesus is "the Son of God". Yes ladies and gents, Jesus Christ is the expected Messiah, he does have the ultimate authority as the Son of God;

and I have the proof, just listen to these true stories! He then launches his offensive: Mark lays out story after story, in rapid succession, that bear witness to the deity of the Servant Christ.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to engage us in the excitement that Mark felt as he wrote down the events that marked the beginning of Jesus' ministry**

Group Study

Community Building

Leaders choose one or both of the following:

- 1) What has convinced you in your own experience of walking with Jesus, that he is the Son of God?

OR

What is it about your testimony, or story, that bears witness to the supreme power of Jesus Christ?

Read Mark 1:9-45

- (2) **Baptism of Jesus: vs. 2-11** What was the purpose of John the Baptist? Was it necessary that Jesus be baptized? Why? Did you have anyone in your life that "prepared the way" for you?
- (3) **Jesus in the Wilderness: vs. 12-13** For a broader account read Matthew 4:1-11. How does this story contrast with the story of Israel? Do you think Jesus wanted to go out into the wilderness? What got him through, and continued to sustain him?

What other biblical characters had wilderness experiences? What did God teach them? Have you had wilderness experiences, what sustained you, and what did you learn?

- (4) **Calling of Disciples: vs. 14-20** What do you think drew the disciples, caused them to drop their current lives and follow Jesus? What is interesting about who he chose?

Who do we choose to hang with and reach out to?

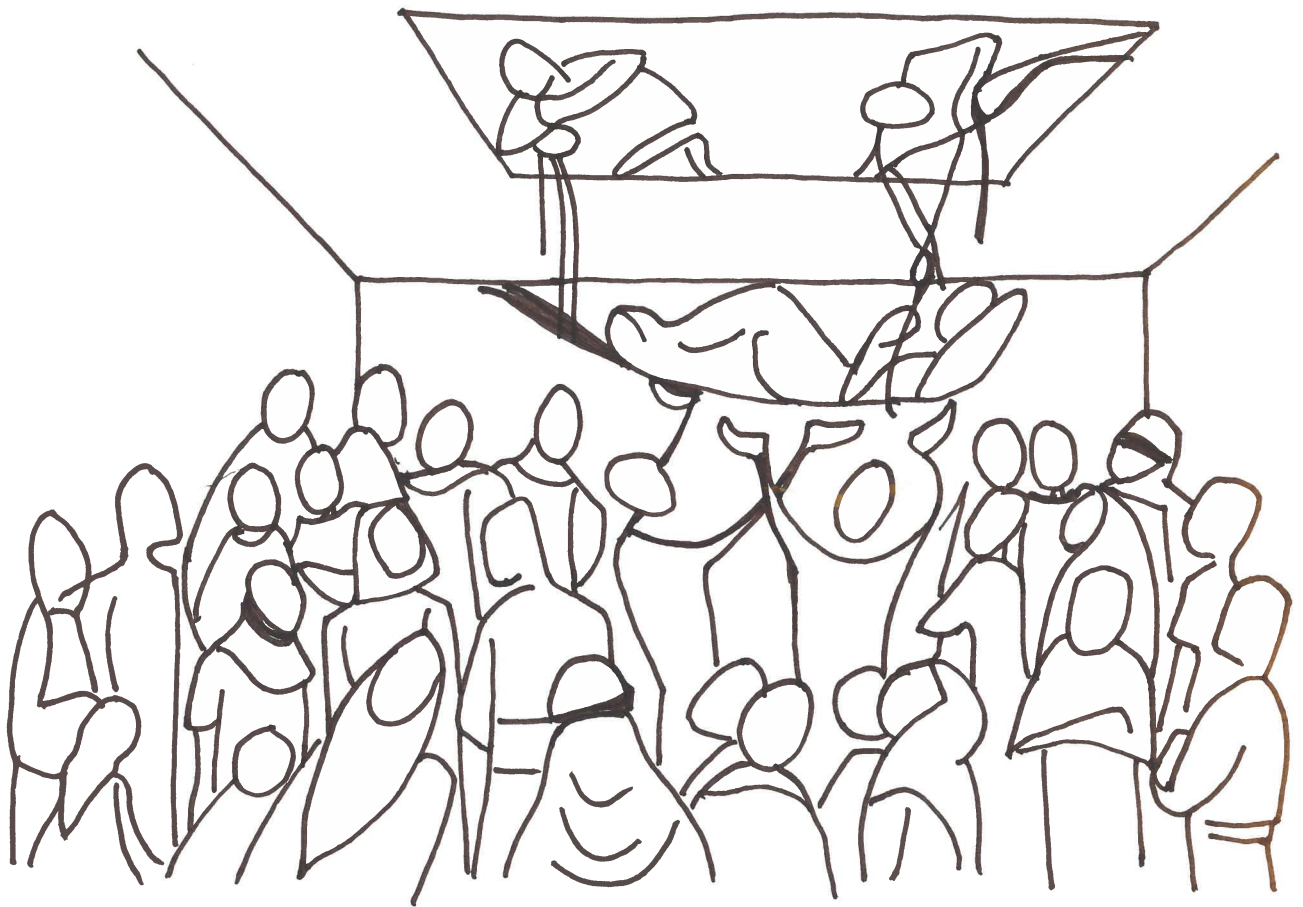
- (5) **Witness: vs. 21-45** List all of the work of Christ in these verses (wow! This is only chapter one!). What do these things say about Jesus?

What type of people do you think this gospel was directed to at the time? Do you think this group was more interested in power or pedigree? Does this style of witnessing have relevance for our culture today? Why or why not?

Prayer

Options for personal application prayer:

- 1) Are you experiencing a wilderness time in your life, feeling disconnected from God, burdened: share and pray.
- 2) Would you like more boldness and power in your witnessing: share and pray.



Study #2

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

Mark 2:1-12

Introduction

Jesus' ministry is spreading. His preaching includes both words and action. He's adding disciples and healing spiritual, emotional and physical paralysis. But now, opposition seems to be building.

As we begin our story, many are gathering in a house in the town of Capernaum to hear and see Jesus. The house has a large flat roof made of clay, branches and wood beams.

⇒ **The aim of this study is recognize the power Jesus has to heal, and more importantly, his power to forgive sin.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Have you ever had an amazing experience with God? How did you feel? Did you want to stay in that experience? Was there any opposition to your experience?

Read Mark 2:1-12

- (2) Why were so many people gathered at the house?

What would you have thought about the interruption if you were:

- a) a member of the crowd?
- b) the owner of the house?
- c) if you were a teacher of the law?
- d) a towns person who couldn't get into the house?

- (3) What "faith" did Jesus see from the friends and the paralytic in verse 5? What had they come to Jesus to accomplish?
- (4) In what ways were the teachers of the law *right* in their response to Jesus in vv. 6-7? In what ways were they *wrong*?

- (5) What's the significance of Jesus' words in verse 9? What shocking insight would verses 10-11 give?

Which do you think was more important to the formerly paralyzed man – that he could walk or that his sins were forgiven? What is the impact of Jesus' power to forgive sins on your life?

- (6) What do you think was going through the mind of the paralytic as Jesus told him to "get up and go home"? Why do you think Jesus told him to go home? During such an amazing experience wouldn't you want to stay with Jesus?
- (7) Try to picture the house after Jesus heals the man. What words would you use to describe the event?

Verses 12 says that the healing of the paralytic amazed everyone. Do you think the teachers of the law were part of this amazed group? Would they have forgotten about Jesus forgiving the man's sins?

- (8) Where are you a little paralyzed right now: emotionally, physically, mentally, spiritually, relationally? In faith, how can God heal you? Like the friends in this story, how can your small group help?

Prayer

Notes

Capernaum - A town on the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was an important town to the whole region and a centre of political and social control. Jesus did many of his teachings and miracles here. He healed the centurion's servant (Matt 8:5-13), and a nobleman's son (John 4:46-54). He called Matthew to follow him (Matt. 9:9-13) and taught about the Bread of Life (Mark 9:33-50). But the town rejected him and Jesus predicted its destruction (Matt 11:23-24). It was destroyed by the Romans within a generation.

Teacher of the Law - Responsible for teaching Israel the Law of Moses. They struggled with Jesus' claims and actions and questioned his identity. Many may have been genuine in their concern to uphold Scripture while many may have been jealous of Jesus' brashness and popularity.

Study #3

Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23 - 3:6

Introduction

To many people the Sabbath is a day of rest. In the Old Testament work was not permitted on that day. There were 39 categories of work forbidden on the Sabbath in the Mishna; the body of Jewish oral law that was written down by the end of the 2nd century. The Law states that observing the Sabbath is the 4th commandment (Exodus 20:8-10) and “whoever does any work on it must be put to death” (Exodus. 35:2). Is the Sabbath held in the same regard today? In this study we will look at what Jesus said concerning the observance of the Sabbath.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to teach us what the Sabbath is for, and how we can make Jesus’ teaching on the Sabbath a reality in our lives**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Think about what the Sabbath means to you. Do you or your family have any special “rules” or traditions for keeping the Sabbath?

Background Study:

- (2) What is the Sabbath? Who created it? Why and how should it be observed? Read Leviticus 23:3, Exodus 31: 14-17, Genesis 2:2-3. Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

Read Mark 2:23-3:6

- (3) vv.23,24 What action of the disciples offended the Pharisees? Why?

Were the actions of the disciples legitimate or did they in fact break a law on the Sabbath? (See also Deut. 23:25).

- (4) vv. 25,26 Why did Jesus refer to the story of David and his companions? What point is Jesus trying to make?
- (5) In Mark 2:27 Jesus says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". What do you think this means?
- (6) Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath". What impact would this statement have on his listeners? How does this add to the picture Mark is drawing of Jesus? See also Matthew 12:6-8.
- (7) In 3:1-6, what further insights does Jesus give into the nature of the Sabbath? How does 3:4 help to explain Jesus' statement 2:27?

How had the Pharisees gotten the spirit of the Sabbath completely wrong?

- (8) In what ways do we get Sabbath keeping wrong? Are we too strict or too lax? In what ways should we observe the Sabbath?

How do we allow Jesus to be Lord of our Sabbath?

Prayer

For some people observing the Sabbath is not held in reverence as it should. Pray that God reveals to you in a new way the whole purpose of the Sabbath and take the time to ask him to reveal to you how you can observe the day.

Notes

Hebrew "sabbat" – The exact meaning is uncertain. Most often refers to the 7th day of the week. Most likely the noun "sabbat" derived from the Hebrew work sabat - "cease". The most ancient characteristic of the 7th day observance is that all work cease.



Study #4

The Parable of the Sower

Mark 4: 1-20

Introduction

The Parable of the Sower begins the section in Mark's gospel where Jesus begins to teach by parables. In the gospels, parables are stories that communicate truth, usually having to do with describing something about life with God. The word "parable" is from the Greek *parabol*, which means "putting things side by side". Therefore, the parable functions as a way of revealing truth in a surprising or jolting way to the listening audience.

The point of the first parable is to get the attention of those who have been following Jesus. He has done many miraculous healings and taught with great authority, thus he has caused a bit of a stir around town. Yet, Jesus has not come for entertainment purposes. He is not the ringleader of a circus, he is announcing the coming of the kingdom of God in order that people might enter it through him.

Note: this parable can be taken at many levels. This study will be based more on how the parable functions within the context of Mark's gospel.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to teach us to listen to the word of God and to let it flourish and grow in our lives.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Have you ever not understood what someone was saying, yet when they asked if you had any questions you refused to ask any? Tell a few of those stories. What are some of the reasons we refuse to ask any of our questions?

Read Mark 4:1-20

- (2) Describe the scene here as Jesus begins to teach by parables. Based on what you already know about the gospel of Mark, why do you think so many people have come out to see Jesus? (Review what has happened in Mark's Gospel so far.)
- (3) vv. 3-9 What do you notice about Jesus' story? If you were in the crowd would you understand the story's point? (don't read ahead, answer from what you know in these verses!)

What is important about the fact that Jesus begins this story with the word "Listen!"? What evidence do we have in this passage that the people actually responded to Jesus' call?

- (4) vv.10-20 Describe the setting of this section. What do the disciples (and the others who had gathered around him) ask Jesus? What does this tell you about these people's understanding of the parable?

What does Jesus tell them about this parable? Why do you think they get the "secret of the Kingdom of God" but others don't? What makes these people different from the larger crowd?

- (5) Why does Jesus quote Isaiah 6:9-10? (see Note below)
- (6) Jesus now explains the four soils to the disciples. What are they about? Given the quote from Isaiah, what is the basic issue?
- (7) How is your hearing? (Read through Jesus' explanation of the parable). Is there one soil you particularly identify with? Explain.

What are the barriers in your life which keep you from hearing and responding to God's word? What are the things that can help you really hear God's word and respond to it more effectively? How can you, as a member of a Home Group, help the community to be better hearers of God's word?

- (8) Notice the good soil's productivity. Even though it is one soil out of four, its fruit is described as many more times what was planted; 30, 60 or even a 100 times more! What does this tell you about the nature of the word of God?

How does this encourage you about what the Lord can do in and through you?

Prayer

Take some time now to pray. Take some time of silence just to listen to the Lord. Then respond through confession or repent if need be, and/or respond by asking him to make his word known to you like the disciples did.

Notes

Isaiah 6:9-10

The context of Isaiah 6:9-10 is similar to that of Mark 4:1-20. In Isaiah, God has been calling Israel but they refuse to listen to Him. Through their response to the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5, they judge themselves. Therefore, Isaiah is called to proclaim the message of judgment that these people will always see and hear, but never perceive, as they have just proven through their response to the previous parable. Jesus seems to be taking on this same idea. He has been announcing the kingdom – peace and healing and mercy. All they have to do is come to Him, but very few have been responding. Therefore, through the parable of the sower, Jesus tests the people's response to what they hear, and only a few of them come to him to ask him what he means; thus the disciples get in on the kingdom, but those who don't listen are left out!

Study #5

The Healing of a Demon-Possessed Man

Mark 5: 1-20

Introduction

Mahesh Chavda, an evangelist who has a worldwide ministry of healing and evangelism, worked in a State School for Retarded Children while he was a student in Texas. He testifies to his encounter with one of those children, Stevie, in his book *Only Love Can make a Miracle*:

One of the most heart rending cases in the entire school was a boy named Stevie. He had an extreme form of Down's Syndrome...(Stevie) was a self mutilator. Something drove him to put his fists together and beat himself savagely about the head and face. He did this almost continually. His entire face was like one massive callous from years of pounding...His ears were enlarged and grotesque, his eyes swollen shut, his lips blackened and disfigured...

The staff had tried everything they could do to bring Stevie's bizarre behavior to a halt...the records seemed to indicate that his self mutilation had gotten worse, not better. Finally, in desperation the staff fastened his arms to long rigid splints that kept them fully extended at all times. He would walk around the school with his arms sticking straight out to the side...

(Mahesh prayed to the Lord for help for Stevie. The Lord gave him this message from the gospel of Mark: "This kind can only come out by prayer and fasting", in reference to the demon possessed boy the disciples could not heal (Mark 9:29). Mahesh believed that the Lord was telling him that Stevie's problem was caused by a demon. He fasted for 14 days until the Lord told him to go and pray for Stevie.)

I took Stevie into a small office that we sometimes used for staff meetings. "Stevie," I began, "I know you don't understand me. Your mind isn't capable of it, but your spirit is. I want to tell you that I am a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. I've come to preach the good news to you, to tell you that Jesus came to set the captives free. God loves you, Stevie. He sent his Son, Jesus to die for the sins of the whole world and to release us from bondage to the devil."...I looked at Stevie as though I were looking right into his spirit and said, "In the name of Jesus, you foul spirit of mutilation, come out of him now!"

As I said those words, Stevie's body was suddenly flung out of his chair and all the way back against the wall. It was like someone picking up a rag doll and tossing it across the room. He sat there on the floor a moment, leaning back against the wall. Then, he opened his mouth and released a loud sigh. It sounded like a person who was choking, trying to exhale. It seemed to last for a full minute, this long, low sighing sound. For a moment, the room was filled with a smell like rotten eggs. Then, as suddenly as it had begun, the sighing stopped and the smell dissipated. Stevie just sat there...something about him had changed. I untied his arms. Slowly he raised his hands to his face. He began gently feeling his cheeks, his eyes, his mouth...I

realized that this was the first time Stevie had ever been able to touch his face without being driven to batter himself...Stevie never again had to wear his arm splints. From that day on he never again exhibited the self-destructive behavior that had plagued him for so long. The Lord had delivered him.

Jesus himself declared that he had come to set the captives free. In the account from Mark we are studying today he does just that. Mahesh Chavda's testimony tells us Jesus is still delivering prisoners from their chains.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to recognize the power and authority of Jesus to heal and deliver during his earthly ministry and in our everyday lives.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Have you ever felt "imprisoned" in some way (emotionally, even physically)? What was it like when you were set free? (Share whatever you feel is appropriate).

Read Mark 5:1-20

- (2) Just previous to this encounter with the demon-possessed man, Jesus has calmed the storm. "Quiet! Be still!" he commanded the wind and waves (Mark 4:39). In a similar manner he addresses the demons: "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!" (v.8). Why do you think Mark put these two stories together? What do these stories teach you about Jesus?
- (3) In verse 6, notice that the demons instantly recognize Jesus for who he really is. Read James 2:19. What conclusions can you draw from:
 - a) the demons' response to Jesus (v. 6-7)?
 - b) the fact that demons recognize Jesus' nature but men often don't?

- c) the effect of ultimate good on ultimate evil?
- d) the nature of belief and faith?

- (4) Even as Christians, our modern response to this kind of story is often skeptical – demon possession – *oh, please!* Surely this was just an early example of mental illness – there are no demons! Share your views and experiences. Then review the story you read in the introduction. There are startling similarities between Mahesh Chavda's testimony and Mark's story. List them in the graph below. What are your conclusions?

	The Gadarene Demoniac	Stevie
Condition before deliverance		
Treatment received		
What happened when their demons confronted		
Condition after deliverance		

- (5) Why do you think Jesus allowed the demons to go into the pigs?
- (6) How did the townspeople react to Jesus' actions? What was the focus of their concern? What would you have done – seeing the dead pigs on one hand and a poor wretch set free and healed on the other?
- (7) The people made a dangerous request of Jesus – they asked him to leave – and he did. Why couldn't or wouldn't Jesus stay there?

In what ways do we shut Jesus and his transforming power out of our lives?
What would happen if we asked him to “stay”?

- (8) Jesus said yes to the townspeople's request for him to leave, but refused the healed man's request to go with him. Why did he want the man to stay?

Consider the man's task – to witness to the power of Jesus to the very people who had told Jesus to get out! However, we see he was successful (verse 20). What do you think the man told the people about Jesus after his brief encounter with him? What does this tell you about the equipping we need to tell others about what Jesus has done for us?

Prayer



Study #6

Jesus Sends out the Twelve

Mark 6:6b -13

Introduction

Mark has been unfolding for us the ministry of Jesus, both his words and his works. Scene after scene has expanded our picture of who Jesus is and what he does.

Jesus had called a group of followers together, designating them apostles, to carry out the same ministry of words and works (Mark 3:13-19). Now we watch as he sets them loose.

We, too, have been called and sent by the same Master. So sit up and take notice and see what there is to learn from the experience of these first disciples.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to understand the clear focus of the disciples' mission ... and how it relates to us.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Share a memory of a time when you knew you were absolutely, completely dependent on the Lord? How did you feel? What did you do?

Read Mark 6:6b-13

- (2) What has the ministry of Jesus himself been all about so far? What has he done to demonstrate the truth of his statement in 1:15? Review chapter 1 briefly (see especially 1:14-15 & 1:39).
- (3) Mark 6:7. Jesus "sent them out ... and gave them authority." We see more of what their commission was from the things they did (6:12-13). Jesus had been preparing them for this ministry from the very beginning (see 1:17 & 3:14-15). What was their mission? Are you surprised or skeptical? Why was each part of the mission important? How did each part reinforce the others?
- (4) Why do you think Jesus sent them out "two by two" (6:7)? Is there any ongoing principle here?

- (5) Mark 6:8-10. Imagine being sent on this mission yourself. What would it do for you to have to live by these instructions? Would you be fearful, excited, disgruntled?

Why would Jesus have given such instructions?

- (6) Mark 6:11. Jesus raises the real possibility that the disciples will experience rejection while they are on mission. How would this advance warning help them later on?

How do you respond to being rebuffed when you tell others about your faith? Share your experiences. Would it make any difference if you clearly heard Jesus say in advance that this would indeed happen? (see John 15:18-19)

- (7) Mark 6:11. Jesus instructs the disciples to “shake the dust off your feet” against any place that will not welcome or listen to them. Why? What was the point? What effect would it have? (see Note #1 below for further insight)

Are we ever called to do similarly today with those who reject the gospel? What might the effect be?

- (8) How does this passage apply to us? What parts of it (if any) were only for that specific occasion? What parts are enduring? (Compare with Jesus’ final commission to the disciples in Mark 16:15-18.)

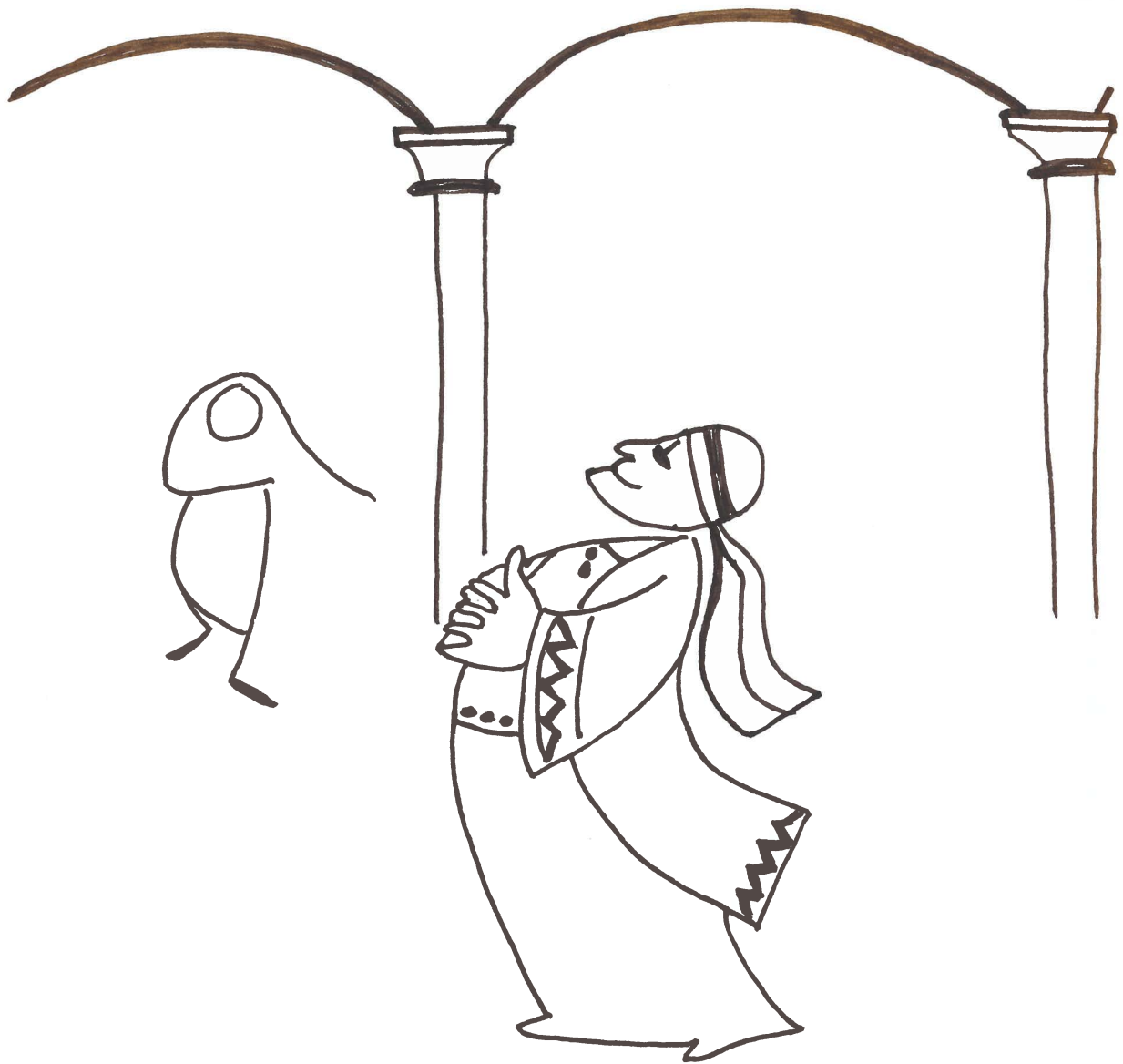
Do we need to adjust our activities, methods or priorities?

Notes

Mark 6:11 "... shake the dust off your feet when you leave ..."

"This instruction is intelligible in the light of Jewish practice. It was the custom of pious Jews who had travelled outside of Israel to remove carefully from their feet and clothing all dust of the alien lands in which they had travelled. By this action they dissociated themselves from the pollution of those lands and their ultimate judgment. An analogous action on the part of the disciples would declare that a village was pagan in character. It would provide warning that the disciples had fulfilled their responsibility and that those who had rejected the mission would have to answer to God."

(William L. Lane, The Gospel of Mark, pp. 208-209)



Study #7

Clean and Unclean

Mark 7: 1-23

Introduction

The Gospel of Mark has a direct approach in its literary style. Mark does not waste time in exposing the hypocrisy of Jesus' opponents as they accuse Jesus' disciples of not respecting the "tradition of their elders". Jesus responds by a direct reference to the prophet Isaiah (29:13) where the prophet laments the fact that Israel, God's chosen people, honour God with their lips but not with their hearts. We may quote scripture, claim that we have a personal knowledge of God, however, if we use other people or

feel superior to others, we do not know God or ourselves. Jesus goes on to expose the human being's innate ability for self-deception. The Pharisees could withhold money from needy members of their own family under the religious tradition of "Corban" (that is, a gift devoted to God). The critical question, however, is not what we may appear to be on the outside, but who we are on the inside.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to examine who we are on the inside.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Have you ever had the experience of seeing hypocrisy in action? Have any of your friends been turned off the Gospel of Christ because of the hypocritical actions of Christians? (Share what you feel is appropriate, share with humility).

Read Mark 7: 1-23

- (2) Does one's focus on another person's actions place us in a position of not seeing our own actions? (Note verses 1&2, "come from Jerusalem" and "saw some of his disciples" ; these phrases indicate the Pharisees were not focusing on their actions but on those of Jesus and his disciples).
- (3) The Pharisees and teachers of the law claimed "tradition" as their platform for criticizing Jesus' disciples. Do we have "traditions of men" we hold on to which lead us to be critical of others?
- (4) Why was Jesus so direct with the Pharisees in his use of the word "hypocrite"? Do we need to expose hypocrisy with the same commitment?

- (5) Jesus accused the Pharisees of nullifying the word of God with their traditions (verse 13). He goes on to say they “do many things like that”. How can some of our traditional interpretations of scripture make it lose its power in our lives?

- (6) Note verses 18-23. How does Jesus teach his disciples the difference between tradition and truth?

Prayer

Take some time as individuals and as a group to think about how much of an effort we put into the process of discerning what really influences our understanding of God. The answer to this question involves the question of how much we depend on the Holy Spirit's power to discover who God is and what He wants to show us about ourselves and others.

Study #8

“You are the Christ”

Mark 8: 27-33

Introduction

Up to this point, Jesus has been keeping his true identity a secret (1:34, 43; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36). Now he asks his disciples who people think he is, and who they think he is.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to get a better understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Have you ever suddenly become aware of a new aspect of the character of Jesus Christ – or his work on your behalf? How did you react? How were you blessed?

Read Mark 8:27-33

- (2) Read Note 1 below and consider: What significance could there be in the fact that Jesus asked this question in these particular surroundings?
- (3) Notice the variety of opinion as to who Jesus is. Why would they have arrived at these conclusions? What do we learn about Jesus?

What was lacking in the people's assessments of Jesus?

Who do people today think Jesus is? What is lacking in their assessments?

- (4) What do you think Peter meant by “the Christ” (see note 2)? Matthew 16:16 adds “the Son of the living God”. What would be the significance of this given the history of the spot? (note 1 again)

- (5) Israel was promised a future Messiah who would be prophet, priest and king. Read the following scriptures and see how Jesus fulfills these roles:
 - a) prophet (one who reveals God’s words to men) See John 12:49,50
 - b) priest (one who represents the people to God) See Hebrews 4:14,15
 - c) king (one who rules) See John 18:36-37.

Knowing that Jesus fulfills these roles, what difference does it make in your relationship with Him?

- (6) Why would Jesus warn his disciples not to reveal his identity to anyone?

- (7) Why does Jesus immediately begin to tell his disciples about his death? Why is it important to link this truth with the fact that he is “the Christ”?

Verses 31-32. Jesus “spoke plainly”, but what did these words mean to his disciples: at the time (Mark 9:31-32) and after he had risen (John 12:16, Luke 24:45-47)?

- (8) Compare Peter’s insight in verse 29 and then verse 32. What lesson could this have for us in the study of the Word?

Notes

- 1) Caesarea Philippi was a Greco-Roman city near the headwaters of the Jordan river at the base of Mount Hermon. At the time of Israel's conquest of Canaan it had been the site of the worship of Baal-Gad (Joshua 11:17) or Baal-Hermon (Judges 3:3). About 200 B.C. the cave and spring there were dedicated to the god Pan, and it was called Panias. Caesar Augustus gave the area to Herod the Great, who built a temple to Caesar there, calling it Caesarea. Later Philip enlarged and beautified the city.
- 2) "Messiah" ("Christ" is the New Testament or Greek version of the Hebrew word) as a name or title does not occur in the Old Testament, though the adjective "meshiach" (anointed) and verb "meshach" (to anoint) are used:

- a) of prophets (1 Kings 19:16, 1 Chronicles 16:22) and
- b) of priests (Exodus 28:41), but mainly
- c) of kings (1 Samuel 10:1, 2 Samuel 2:4; 1 Kings 1:39)

Israel was promised a future deliverer who would be:

- a) a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15, 17-19)
- b) a priest (1 Samuel 2:35; Psalm 110:4)
- c) a king (Isaiah 9:7, 2 Samuel 7:16)

To the Jews, the most important anointed one thus far was King David (Psalm 89:20, 2 Samuel 22:51), and the most important future promise was a king in David's line. David had been the ideal king, and the people longed for another like him, but the kingdom was divided and the people went into exile. This hope was projected into the future and in the period between the Old and New Testaments the people looked for a Messiah or Anointed One. This expectation took a variety of forms, mainly:

- a) a national figure, a human being, who would assume the kingship of Judah and deliver them from oppression.
 - b) a transcendent personage, part human and part divine, who would establish the kingdom of God on earth.
- 3) "Son of Man" -- this was Jesus' favorite designation of himself. Books have been written on what this phrase meant to the people of his time, and what He meant. Some think it was simply a longer way of saying "I". Perhaps it could best be understood to indicate that as the representative Man he was to undergo the sufferings he outlines on behalf of all mankind. His baptism (Mark 1:11; Matthew 3:13-15) could be seen as Jesus identifying himself with sinful mankind and promising to pay the debt men cannot pay (Romans 5:6)



Study #9

The Transfiguration

Mark 9:2-13

Introduction

In our last study, Peter was commended for his confession of Jesus as the Christ (Messiah), then rebuked for his inadequate understanding of the mission of the Messiah, which was to include suffering and rejection. Jesus predicted that his followers also would suffer, but that some of them would see the Son of Man in his glory. Now three of them see his glory, even if fleetingly. The memory of this stayed

with them throughout their lives (2 Peter 1:16-18; John 1:14; 1John 1:1-3 – James was martyred early, and left no written testimony).

⇒ **The aim of this study is to gain a fresh appreciation of the intrinsic glory of our Lord, and why its greatest manifestation was in his sacrifice for us.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Have you ever had a sudden understanding/realization of the glory/greatness of the Lord? How did this affect you?

Read Mark 9:2-8

- (2) “After six days”. This connects the scene with the previous one. What is the significance?

Read Exodus 24:15,16. What similarities do you see between these two events?

- (3) He was transfigured”: the verb is “metamorphoo” from which we get “metamorphosis”, but the change is much greater than that from a worm to a butterfly. The description “dazzling white” suggests extreme whiteness, and the shining of lightning or the gleam of light reflected off the blade of a sword. The verb “metamorphoo” is also used of the believer who reflects the glory of the Lord (2 Corinthians 3:18). What veils may we be using that mar this reflection of his glory?

- (4) "There appeared Moses and Elijah". Why these two?
a) See Luke 24:27
b) see Deuteronomy 18:15, John 7:40,41, Malachi 4:5,6
c) see Deuteronomy 34: 5,6, 2 Kings 2:11,17
- (5) Verse 5: Why did Peter want to build 3 "shelters"? What kind of shelter do you think Peter had in mind? (see note). What was wrong with his reaction to the situation? For one possibility, see verse 8.
- (6) The voice from the cloud: What was its significance? See Exodus 19:9, 34:5, Mark 1:11.
- (7) Verses 7-8. Who is to command the attention of the disciples' ears and eyes? What lasting impact did the Transfiguration have on Peter and John (see 2 Peter 1:16-19 & 1 John 1:1-3)?

We were not there on the mount of Transfiguration. How can we keep our eyes and ears riveted on Jesus?

Read Mark 9:9-13

- (8) Why couldn't the disciples speak of Christ's glory until after He had been crucified and had risen? (The gospel of John gives an interesting perspective on how Jesus' glory is revealed -- see John 12:16, 27-28; 13:31, 17:4-5).

Prayer

Notes

- 1) "A high mountain" The traditional site of this revelation is Mount Tabor, southwest of the sea of Galilee, but this is only 1,843 feet high. Since the previous event was at the foot of Mount Hermon, over 9,000 feet high, this might be a more likely setting.
- 2) "Shelters". "Skeenee", the word used here, is used in the Greek version of the Old Testament for three different words:
 - a) "ohel" : the black Bedouin tent of goats hair and the goat's hair covering of the tabernacle, a tent as covering or protection, or the tabernacle as a place of meeting.
 - b) "mishcan": the tabernacle proper, as the dwelling place of God.
 - c) "soocah" (or "succoth"): a covered structure, shelter or booth such as the Israelites lived in during the Feast of Tabernacles (or Booths) which commemorated the temporary booths they lived in as they crossed the desert.

Study #10

The Rich Young Man

Mark 10:17-31

Introduction

It has been observed that the four gospels have been written from four different perspectives. Matthew wrote to the Jewish people (many references to Jewish customs, genealogy, temple, laws, etc.) Mark wrote to the Romans (full of action, frequent phrases like immediately, at once, straight away, etc.) Luke wrote to the Greeks (thoughtful, logical, explains Jewish customs, etc.). John wrote to the whole world.

In just a few short verses this study deals with a wide range of topics: good works, the afterlife, the nature of goodness, the true identity of Jesus, the nature of God, keeping the commandments, poverty, earthly riches and heavenly treasure.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to learn about what it means to follow Jesus in a world of wealth.**

Group Study

Community Building

(1) What is wrong with having or wanting money? Discuss.

Mark 10: 17-31

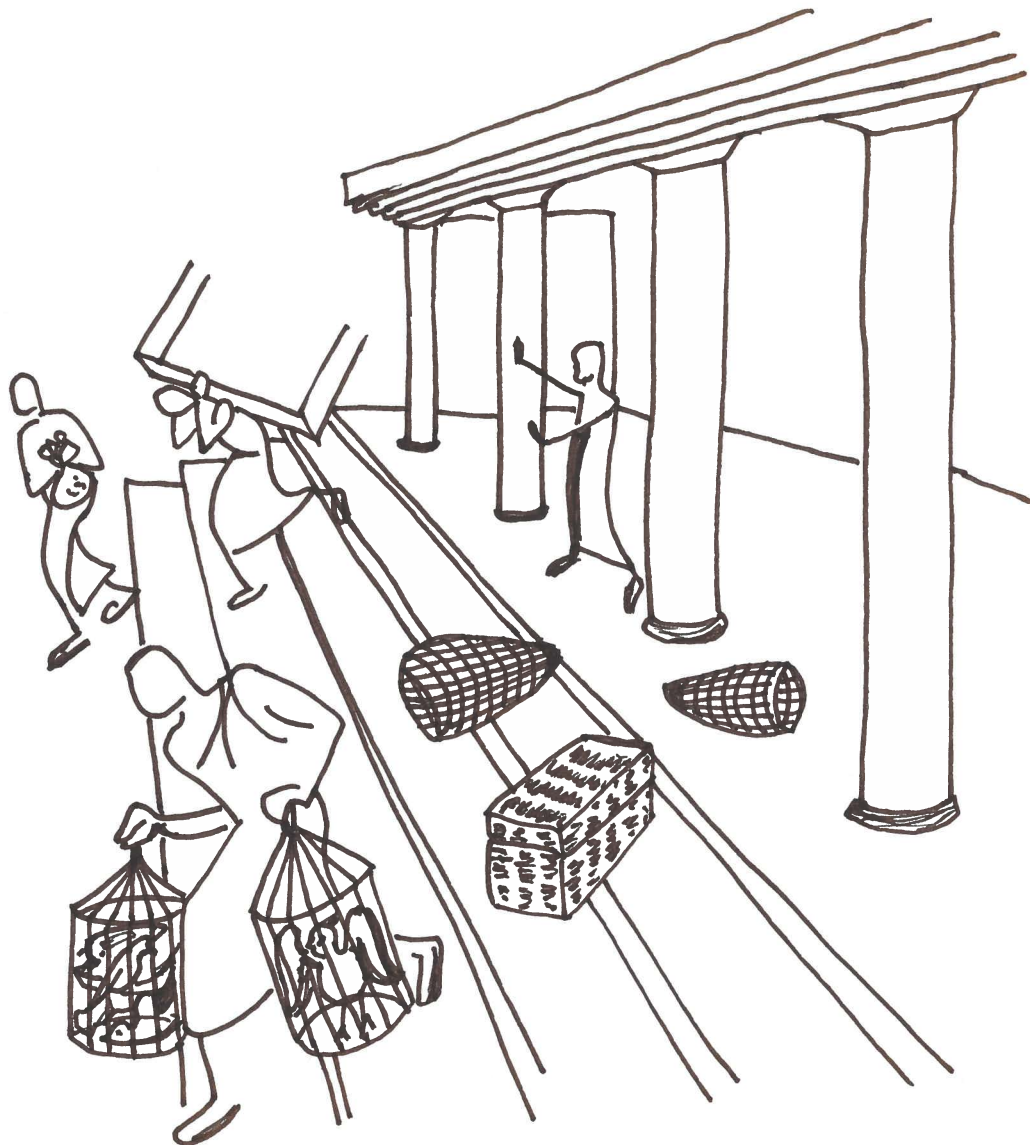
(2) Do you find this young man attractive? Why or why not?

- (3) Instead of giving a direct answer to the young man's question, Jesus counters with one of his own: "why do you call me good?" Any ideas about this?
- (4) What do you notice about the commandments quoted in verse 19? Refer to Exodus 20:1-17.
- (5) Can one be saved by keeping the commandments? If not, what is the point of trying to keep them? Refer to Romans 3:20, Galatians 3:1-6.
- (6) Was the young man telling the whole truth in verse 20? Did he realize who Jesus was?
- (7) What did the young man lack (v. 21)? How would the disposal of his wealth remedy that lack? Refer to Matthew 6:19-21.
- (8) Will there be any rich people in heaven (verse 26)? Discuss. Refer to 1 Cor. 1:26-31.
- (9) What do you gather from verses 28-31?

Prayer

Notes

Some have suggested that a small pedestrian gate called the Needle's Eye was part of the wall of Jerusalem, hence the reference in v. 25. Many scholars, however, believe that this was a typical Jewish idiom used to express difficulty, absurdity or impossibility.



Study #11

The Authority of Jesus

Mark 11:1-33

Introduction

One consistent characteristic of Mark's gospel is the presence of "Markan sandwiches". A Markan sandwich is where the parables, miracles and stories of Jesus seem to be set in a specific order, to deepen the meaning of a parable or story in its specific context. Mark 11:1-33 is situated in such a way. The preceding verses, Mark 10:46-52, recount the story of the healing of blind Bartimeus. It seems more than an accident that a physically blind man refers to Jesus as "Son of David", highlighting that

Jesus is truly the promised Messiah. What a contrast with the religious leaders in our passage who physically see, but are spiritually blind, not believing that Jesus is the Messiah. Our passage is followed by the parable of wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-12), then a discussion about paying taxes (12:13-17) which relates to the situation in the temple that made Jesus so angry.

As Jesus enters Jerusalem, it is the Sunday beginning the week of his death, and one week before his resurrection. The people are so excited that Jesus is coming to Jerusalem. It is time for the Passover and they are cheering him on as the Messiah.

⇒ **The aim of this study is see the authority of Jesus in action.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) How do you feel when you encounter authority? Think of a time you responded positively and a time you responded negatively.

Mark 11:1-33

- (2) Verses 1-11. What a spectacular way for Jesus to begin the final week of his ministry prior to his death. How is Jesus' glory and authority communicated in the sights and sounds of the day?

Many of these people who are cheering Jesus (verse 9) will shout "Crucify him!" in a few days. How can one's heart turn against the Lord so quickly?

- (3) Another Markan sandwich is Jesus' cursing of the fig tree (vv. 12-14). Is Jesus being unfair since it was not the time of year for figs to be produced? (see Note below).

When the disciples see the withered fig tree (verse 20) they are surprised. How do the cursing of the fig tree and the clearing of the temple illustrate Jesus' authority in different ways? If you were there, which would impact you more?

- (4) Playing the Prayer Game: Through the withered fig tree Jesus teaches the disciples about faith and prayer. Do you believe that prayer works? Do you believe God answers the daily prayers you pray as much as you believe he answers prayer for salvation? Why or why not?

Bitterness and sin can act as interruptions to our "telecommunications" with God. What does Jesus mean in Mark 11:25?

- (5) Spring cleaning: why is Jesus so angry about what is going on in the temple (vv.15-19)? Discuss: do you see similar things in the world-wide church today? How about in our own church? What about our own lives?

Notice that this is the second clearing of the temple -- according to John's gospel, Jesus cleared the temple at the beginning of his ministry also (see John 2:12-25). Was it wrong for Jesus to be angry? We often perceive Jesus as being a man without an ounce of emotion, but the picture portrayed in the temple clearings was that he was really ticked off. Did he sin when he was angry? Read Eph 4:26 and James 1:20: What is the difference between "man's" anger and the anger of Jesus?

- (6) In verse 27, Jesus seems almost to be "on patrol" to make sure the moneychangers don't return. The teachers attempt to trap Jesus in his words, but again, he traps them. Why do Jesus' opponents pinpoint the issue of authority? Why does Jesus ask an authority question of his own?
- (7) Stepping back and looking at the whole picture, Jesus is angry when the temple of God is filled with deceit, greed, and the love of selfish things. Read 1Cor.

6:19-20 and Matt. 15:7-11. How are we a temple? When do we resemble the temple that made Jesus so angry? How do we change?

Prayer

Notes

v.12-14. Some have suggested that a few figs grow along with the leaves, prior to the major crop. Jesus uses the fig tree to portray Israel, and their fruitlessness. They often have the "leaves", the outward signs of fruitfulness, but no fruit to show for it. The fig tree incident is positioned like bookends around Jesus' clearing of the temple.

Verse 27 When people came to give their offerings at the temple, they had to exchange their money for "temple currency". The exchange rate was exorbitant -- the moneychangers were ripping the people off.

Study #12

The Greatest Commandment

Mark 12:28-34

Introduction

Love God, love your neighbour: two seemingly simple commands which cover the whole territory of our discipleship. We are challenged by them each and every day: at home, at work, and in the church.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to refocus priorities in our relationship with God.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Rules are part of our life. Growing up, what was the hardest rule for you to keep? Are you a rule-breaker or a rule-keeper?

Read Mark 12:28-34

- (2) Consider the man, a scribe, who approaches Jesus; he knows the law like the back of his hand; some classify him as a lawyer. Two possible ways to understand his attitude towards Jesus are either that he sees how poorly the Sadducees debated Jesus and he wants to do better, or that he genuinely respects Jesus' authority in the same way Nicodemus did in John 3. When the man asks which is the most important commandment, what do you think he wants? How do you understand his attitude? (Keep in mind that by the time Jesus appears on the scene, the Jews have drawn out from God's word approximately 613 laws – an onerous burden for anyone.)
- (3) Jesus quotes Deut. 6:4-5. What relation does this have to the first commandment of the "big ten"? (see Exodus 20:3)

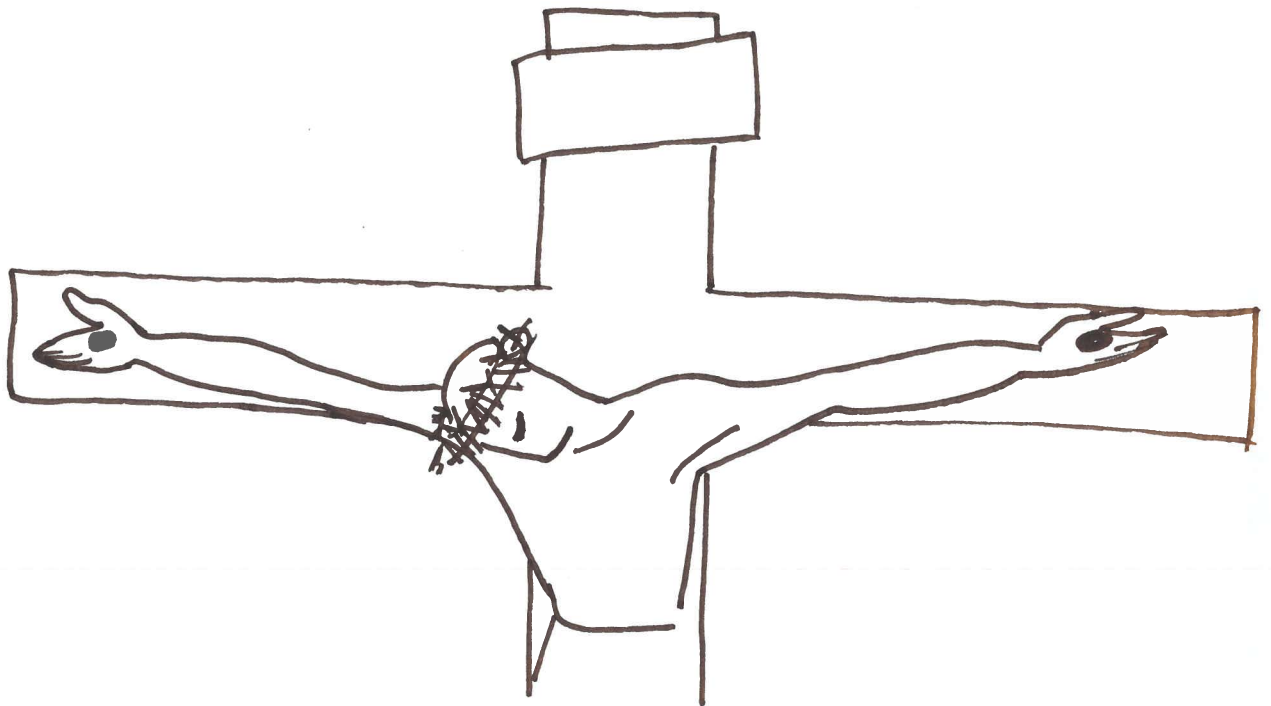
How does this first commandment affect the remaining nine commandments?

- (4) The man only asked for the greatest, but Jesus obliges him and completes all of the Old Testament law by adding "Love your neighbour as yourself". Is there a sequential order to these, why or why not? What happens when you try to do the second, before doing the first? How is the first meaningless without the second?
- (5) Jesus' brother James discusses "pure religion" and "worthless religion". Read James 1:22-27. How does James apply Jesus' two commandments?
- (6) Elsewhere in scripture, Jesus says, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). What areas in your life need more attention in light of this verse?
- (7) Now when the scribe compliments Jesus' answer, he goes on to speak about issues concerning the heart. He says that loving God and your neighbor are more important than "all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (v. 33). How does this differ from the ceremonial religion of the Pharisees?

What happens if we attempt to put ceremonies before our relationship with the Lord?

- (8) How do we apply these two commandments at home, work, with our friends, or at church?

Prayer



Study #13

The Cross

Mark 14:1-15:47

Introduction

Here is the central moment of all history. The enormity of the event stands in stark contrast to Mark's simple, straight forward, fast moving story-telling. Powerful.

But we so easily miss the impact because the story has become all too familiar. May we have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to absorb all that is laid out for us here.

- ⇒ **The aim of this study is to be gripped afresh by the power and passion of the cross.**

Group Study

The following Group Study is somewhat different than usual. The idea is to soak in the reality of the cross - through reading, reflection, worship and perhaps a meal together (see below).

- (1) Together, read through the whole of chapters 14 & 15 as a dramatic reading. Assign parts. You'll need a narrator, or 2 or 3 or more, depending how you want to divide it up. You'll need someone to read each of the following parts:

Chief priests and teachers of the law
indignant bystanders (sniffing perfume)
Jesus
disciples
Peter
Judas Iscariot
givers of false testimony
High Priest
servant girl
other bystanders accusing Peter
Pilate
the crowd
passersby at the cross
man (with sponge of wine vinegar)
centurion

Soak up the reading. Listen to the drama. Feel what your particular character would have been feeling at the time - think about his or her motivation and perspective.

- (2) Share together what struck you most from the reading - what did you see or hear in a new way?

Have each person who had a role in the dramatic reading share what insight they got from their character. What was going on? Why did they respond the way they did?

- (3) Share your reflections on Jesus' suffering on your behalf.

Options

- (1) Having read the passage and shared your reflections together, take part in a simple service of **Communion**. You could leave the time completely open for sharing of scriptures, insights, prayers, songs, thanksgivings, etc. as the Spirit leads. Or, someone (or a few together) could creatively (beforehand) prepare a short service of songs, reflections, scripture readings, sharing, open prayer, etc. and then lead the Group through the time of worship.
- (2) Take the whole evening to have a **Passover** meal together. Instructions for doing so can be found in Martha Zimmerman's book, Celebrate the Feasts (available in the church library), or talk to Martha directly (or Sarah or Tim) for details. The Passover service itself includes a lot of reading, so you may decide not to read the whole of Mark 14-15 together. But read at least 14:12-26 and 15:16-41 before you start into the Passover service. Afterwards, be sure to talk together about the powerful background that the Passover provides to the cross. What new insights do you receive?

Prayer

Make sure to pray for the Guest Services which will be held in the Easter season. We have more people attend services at Granville during this season than at any other time. Pray, fervently, that a number would come to faith and many, many more would sign up for the ALPHA course. Salvation, of course, is the point of the cross - what better way to conclude this study than to pray that the power of the cross would truly be experienced by those who have never yet understood it.



Study #14

The Resurrection

Mark 16:1-8

Introduction

Last week we read Mark's long, detailed account of our Lord's terrible humiliation: his betrayal, arrest, abandonment, scourging, mocking, nakedness, crucifixion and death. We became intimately aware of the travails of this Man as he paid the cost of our redemption, dying our death for us.

But the story does not end there. We Christians know that. There is a “happy ending” a positive “reversal of fortunes”, a triumphant climax. Mark now turns to the wonder of the resurrection, yet with a brevity and sketchiness that contrasts with the much fuller portrait of Christ’s death. Perhaps this is intentional so that we are not tempted to gloss over the horror of the cross, to discount the death of Jesus. Something *is* lost, something *is* paid, for the victory Christ won. And perhaps Mark is brief here because the details are still being written, in the lives of those who are coming to faith in Jesus, born again into newness of life. What we can say, however, is that if there was no resurrection, then our faith is futile and we are still in our sins (1Cor. 15:17). Since we have believed the message that has been passed down to us, let us look into this mystery more deeply.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to discover our place in the resurrection of Jesus.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) How are you with story endings? Do you prefer “happily ever after” endings or do you prefer more “realistic” endings? Share about a book or movie which either disappointed or delighted you with an unexpected ending, whether happy or sad.

Read Mark 16:1-8

- (2) Of that first day when Jesus rose from the dead, Mark’s brief account can possibly strike one as rather odd and inconclusive. Some women came looking for Jesus’ body, but instead come across a strange young man who shows them obvious – that Jesus isn’t there – and then proceeds to give them a message for the disciples. Despite telling them not to be alarmed they flee in fear and don’t tell anyone anything. It hardly sounds like the triumphal moment in the redemption of human history! In the face of modern skepticism over the resurrection does this account reassure you or not? Why?
- (3) Read Mark 14:3-9; 15:39-41, 46-47; John 19:25-27; 20:10-18. From these verses in what ways did women attend to Jesus and He to them? Do you find any significance in this?

- (4) Why do you think Peter is singled out from the rest of the disciples in verse 7?
- (5) The “young man” in the tomb is an angelic messenger from God (see Matt. 28:1-7). Angels always seem to begin their messages with an admonition not to be afraid. Why do you think this is?

In light of *this* angel's message, should fear have given way to some other emotion? Why do you think it didn't?

The women saw the angel and heard his message: “Don't be afraid. He is risen, he is not here”. The women heard this and ran away. You also have received this message. What is your response?

- (6) Some people consider Jesus a victim and his death a tragic cutting short of a promising figure, perhaps like J.F.K. They may acknowledge that his teaching or cause live on, but they fail to see that Jesus' humiliation was a prelude to his exaltation, in having provided the way for *our* exaltation. What kind of a picture do Phil. 2:8-11 and Rev. 5:11-13 paint?
- (7) There is no cenotaph to this fallen hero for us to lay a wreath upon. “He has risen!” , the angel announced. Christ has conquered death and reigns in Life. Read 1 Cor. 15:20-26 and Hebrews 2:14-15. Does the fact of Jesus' resurrection change your attitude towards death? Why or why not?

Prayer



Study #15

Preach the Good News to All Creation

Mark 16:9-20

Introduction

We all enjoy hearing good news. Unfortunately, however, most of what we hear and see on radio and television and in the world around us doesn't qualify as "good news". After a steady diet of news on the radio and television, our ears, our minds, and our hearts thirst for something worth calling good.

By contrast, when we hear of the birth of a baby, the engagement of a friend, even an A+ on a report card, it can be like a spring of excitement welling up within us. We can hardly wait to tell someone.

When we look at this passage we are literally hearing the greatest news ever told to human ears, to human hearts and souls. The angel at the empty tomb declared that Jesus is alive!

⇒ **The aim of this study is to refocus our attention on our responsibility to obey the command to tell out the good news!**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) Think back to the first time you ever heard that Jesus was your Saviour. Who told you? What was your initial response? Share with the group your memories.

Read Mark 16:9-15

- (2) What is the response of Mary Magdalene and “the two” after having seen the risen Jesus?
- (3) What was the response of the disciples to this news? In verse 14 Jesus appears to the disciples. How does Jesus respond to the disciples (vv. 14-15)?

Read Mark 16:15-18

- (4) In verse 15 Jesus tells the disciples to “Go into all the world...”. Is this a request or a command? Do these verses apply to us today? How? What further insight does Mark 13:9-10 give?

- (5) Some have said, “My faith in Jesus is personal and private” and “I don’t want to offend or impose my beliefs on others”. Why should we tell others about Jesus? Read John 14:15-24.

Is there a difference between “telling” (preaching) and “converting”? Read John 6:44.

- (6) Jesus uses the term “good news”. What is the good news we are to preach? How would you put it in your own words? (For a sampler of scriptural help, see any of the following: John 3:16-17, Luke 19:9-10, John 6:35-40, 1 John 5:11-13, Romans 5:6-11.)
- (7) It is said that we are living in a “post-modern” world – a world that rejects the belief in absolute truth. Is this good news about Jesus relevant for all creation today? Why?

Read John 14:5-7, Acts 4:8-12, 1 Tim. 2:5-6. How does the good news offend the politically correct sensibilities of our time? How should we respond?

- (8) What is the significance of the signs which Jesus talks about in vv.17-18 ? How do they relate to us?

Mark 16:19-20

- (9) What is the response of the disciples to Jesus’ words to them?

In light of Jesus’ instruction to the disciples in this passage and reflecting upon Jesus’ previous teachings to his disciples, do you sense a tone of urgency or immediacy in Jesus’ command? In the disciples’ response? Read John 4:34-38.

How can we apply all of this to our lives today?

Prayer

"The Divine Appointment"

We have a ringing command from our Lord to share the gospel, and men and women are lost without Him. Indeed, they are hungry for the good news, and we Christians have in our possession the greatest news ever announced. Our love for the Lord – and His love for us – compels us to obey Him as He leads us into the sharing opportunities of each day.

As you walk in prayerful fellowship with the Lord, always, whenever you're alone with someone, consider it a divine appointment. Always be ready to share your faith. It could be that God has led that person to you, because you know the good news and that person needs to hear it"

Bill Bright, "Witnessing Without Fear"

Pray for God to open our eyes and make us sensitive to divine appointments in each of our lives this week.

Study #16

Signs of the End of the Age

Mark 13:1-37

Introduction

This passage refers to events after Jesus' death and resurrection, so it is appropriate to return to this passage after studying, celebrating and remembering the Easter events. Scholars struggle with this passage and debate over which parts refer to the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in 70 AD) and which refer to the times of the second coming of Jesus. It could be easy in our study to get caught up in debates over specific "end times" events.

It is believed that because of Jesus' words here, Christians in Jerusalem fled the city (and just made it to the town of Pella, east of the Jordan River) when they saw the Roman legions approaching, instead of hoping God would miraculously save Jerusalem. It seems that they took heed of Jesus' warnings. Let us look for insight as to how we can live in our times.

⇒ **The aim of this study is to examine Jesus' instructions to his disciples regarding how they were to live in the times ahead and how we can apply that to our times.**

Group Study

Community Building

- (1) What concerns do the people around you have about the world's future? What makes you most uncertain? How much do these concerns influence daily life?
- (2) Read verses 1-4. What do the disciples see and comment on? What does Jesus see and say in response?

- (3) Read verses 5-27. When pressed further Jesus elaborates and paints a grim picture of what lies ahead. What does Jesus specifically instruct the disciples to do in the midst of all that is ahead?

What does Jesus promise them? (vv. 11,13,20,23,26,27)

- (4) Read verses 28-37. What seems to be the purpose for the signs?
- (5) We are living in the age between Christ's resurrection and ascension and His return to gather all His people. Many times through the centuries, groups have believed that they were living in the end times and Christ's return to be imminent. Our current world is concerned with global problems and as the countdown to the new millennium marches on, we hear a lot about Y2K, wars, famines, hardships and the increased persecution of Christians, and some even claiming to be the Messiah. It could be easy to get caught up in the crisis of it all.

From Jesus' words, what is to be our attitude in the midst of our current times?

What if Y2K (the so-called "Millennium Bug") really does throw everything into chaos, even for a short period. How should we respond?

How can we be "on guard and alert" today?

- (6) Share together any new insights gained from this study and what difference this makes as you listen to the news or go about your daily life. Pray for each other in areas of struggle.

Prayer