MARK

Mark
Key Verse: 10:45

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF MARK

John Mark grew up in Jerusalem in a Christian home. He was influenced by Peter, and Peter's eyewitness accounts of Jesus must have been the chief source of his Gospel. Mark may have been the young man who streaked away on the night Jesus was arrested (14:51,52).

He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, but the hardships of the serving life proved too much for him, so he turned back in Pamphylia. Later, when his cousin Barnabas wanted to take him on the next journey, Paul refused; Paul and Barnabas split up over this issue. Later, Mark came to know Jesus personally and he became a useful man. Paul wrote, "Get Mark ...he is helpful to me." (2Ti 4:11)

Mark 10:45 is the key verse of this gospel. After Mark was changed into a faithful servant of Jesus, he saw Jesus as the Suffering Servant spoken of in Isaiah's prophecies (Isa 52:13-53:12). He wrote about Jesus who served sinners by teaching repentance and faith, and who served the sick and demon-possessed crowds with his healing touch and his powerful word. He trained twelve disciples by being with them until they could learn his shepherd heart, and serve the crowds. He served us by shedding his blood on the cross as a ransom sacrifice for sin.

THE BEGINNING OF THE GOSPEL

Mark 1:1-8

Key Verse: 1:4

1. The gospel begins with prophecy (1-3)

God spoke through his prophet Isaiah about Jesus and his forerunner John some 700 years before their birth. God promised that he would send a messenger to prepare the way for the Messiah. John came to fulfill this prophecy and show that God is faithful to keep his promises.

2. The gospel begins in the wilderness (4a,6)

John was the voice in the wilderness. He wore simple clothes and ate simple food. His working place was not a luxurious office. He did not depend on money; he simply obeyed the word of God and preached that people should repent of their sins. He heralded the coming of the Lord.

3. The gospel begins with repentance (4b-8)

Those who hear the word of God, confess their sins, and ask God's mercy can welcome the Savior. He baptizes with the Holy Spirit. He forgives sins and gives life.

Prayer: Lord, may your gospel come with power into this wilderness world and into my heart.

One Word: Prepare the way for the Lord

JESUS, GOD'S SON, IS BAPTIZED BY JOHN

Mark 1:9-13

Key Verse: 1:11

1. Jesus accepts his mission (9-11)

Jesus was sinless, so he did not need the baptism of repentance. But he came from Nazareth to be baptized by John in the Jordan. He humbly accepted God's history and God's mission, and through his baptism, he stepped into God's redemptive history to fulfill all the promises of God. God was pleased. The Holy Spirit came to equip Jesus for his task.

2. Tempted by Satan (12-13)

A man who accepts God's mission is marked for the devil's attack. So, Satan, mankind's real enemy, attacked Jesus. His tool was temptation. Jesus did not accept the devil's seductive words, but defeating him was a hard fight. His weapon was the word of God (Mt 4). After the devil gave up (for the time being) and left, angels came and ministered to Jesus. The spiritual struggle is exhausting.

Prayer: Lord, help me to accept the mission you have for me; give me your Spirit and your word so that I may do battle with Satan and win.

One Word: God was pleased with Jesus

JESUS BEGINS HIS MINISTRY

Mark 1:14-20

Key Verse: 1:15

1. Repent and believe the good news (14-15)

John's arrest was a sign of the corruption of the times. It was bad news for people who love truth and righteousness. But Jesus did not give up. He proclaimed the good news that the kingdom of God is near. The Savior has come. He does not offer sympathy to oppressed people. He says to all, "Repent." He offers freedom from sin and citizenship in his kingdom.

2. Come, follow me (16-20)

Jesus' invitation, "Follow me," is a call to practical repentance. He calls us to leave self-centered lives and share in his life and mission. He wants us to love as he did. He wants us to be disciple-makers. The four fishermen whom Jesus called left everything and followed him. To be a disciple of Jesus means to put Jesus first--before family, job, home or possessions. A decision to follow Jesus is to begin a new life.

Prayer: Lord, help me to grow in your likeness and become a fisher of men.

One Word: Repent and follow Jesus

THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS' WORD

Mark 1:21-28

Key Verse: 1:27

1. Jesus teaches with authority (21-22)

Jesus taught with authority because he was the Son of God. He taught the Bible with authority because he himself believed and obeyed it. He was different from the scribes who only repeated what they heard, but never really believed it for themselves and never thought about obeying it.

2. Authority to cast out evil spirits (23-28)

Jesus' authority was not superficial. When he taught God's word, the demons in one man got so upset that the man shouted at Jesus. Even demons knew Jesus--and trembled. Jesus ordered the demon out, and it obeyed, reluctantly. Jesus came to challenge the devil and to set men free from his grip. Only Jesus can defeat the devil. When the demon obeyed Jesus, the people were amazed at the authority of Jesus' word.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your word. Let your word come into my heart this morning. Help me to believe your word and obey it so that I may share Jesus with others.

One Word: God's word has authority

JESUS HEALS MANY

Mark 1:29-34

Key Verse:1:31, 34

1. Simon's mother-in-law (29-31)

Jesus expressed his power in love. In his hands was the power that created the universe, but he took the hand of a sick old woman, Simon's mother-in-law and helped her up, and she was completely healed. Her strength returned and she served them with joyful gratitude.

2. The whole town gathered (32-34)

Jesus' day did not end when the sun went down. Sunset marked the end of the Sabbath; it was a signal for everyone to bring their sick and hurting people to Jesus. Jesus welcomed them and healed them. He also drove out many demons. The demons knew him so he would not let them speak. He was their enemy. He did not need their testimony. Jesus' busy Sabbath had begun in the synagogue, teaching the word of God. It ended with crowds coming to him for healing and help. He invaded Satan's stronghold and set many free from his power. His word has power to heal and power to defeat the devil.

Prayer: Lord, let your healing word dwell in my heart and come from my lips.

One Word: Jesus' power is expressed in love

JESUS PRAYS

Mark 1:35-39

Key Verse: 1:35

1. Early in the morning (35)

Jesus' popularity grew. People came to him from early in the morning until late at night. He healed all who came. But he had come to do God's will, not the will of the crowds; so he got up early in the morning to pray. He prayed for himself, for his disciples and for the crowds. He spent time with the Father. And he listened. Some people say that a regular time of prayer is not necessary--but it was for Jesus. How much more do I need to pray!

2. That is why I have come (36-39)

Jesus' disciples were caught up in the pressure of the crowds. Simon Peter even came looking for Jesus--the crowds were waiting. Jesus prayed and found God's direction. He had not come just to heal the physically sick; he had come to preach the word. So he left the milling, demanding crowd to travel around in Galilee and teach the word of God in the synagogues.

Prayer: Lord, help me to meet you in prayer each morning--to pray for your sheep and to find direction and strength for myself. And help me to listen.

One Word: Jesus got up early to pray

JESUS' LOVING TOUCH

Mark 1:40-45

Key Verse: 1:41

1. The man with leprosy (40)

A man with leprosy came to Jesus one day. Leprosy is a repulsive disease. This man must have been lonely and fatalistic. He wondered if anyone was willing to help a person like himself. He overcame the mocking of the crowds and came to Jesus, ready to be rejected.

2. Jesus was filled with compassion (41-45)

Jesus was not repulsed; he was filled with compassion. Even though it was against the law to touch a leper, Jesus touched him with a loving touch. He dispelled his fatalism by his words, "I am willing; be clean." Then Jesus gave him instructions which enabled him to become an active member of society once more. He told the man to keep quiet, but because of his joy, he could not help but tell about Jesus' love. Because of his disobedience, Jesus' ministry was hindered.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your compassion and for your loving touch. Lord, give me courage and compassion to touch untouchables.

One Word: Jesus is always willing

JESUS' AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS

Mark 2:1-12

Key Verse: 2:5

1. Four friends (1-5)

The four men who brought their friend to Jesus had to overcome many obstacles. They even made a hole in the roof of someone else's house. They brought their friend to Jesus by any means. Jesus saw their actions as faith. And he saw that the deeper problem of the paralyzed man was sin. Because of their faith to bring their hopeless friend and his faith to come, Jesus forgave him.

2. Authority to forgive sins (6-12)

Some religious leaders doubted Jesus' authority to forgive sins. So Jesus told the man to get up and walk. He gave visual evidence of his power to forgive and heal. The paralyzed man represents all those sinners who are paralyzed by sin and fatalism. He represents those who are full of bitterness and complaints. Jesus' word of forgiveness and healing makes useless men useful.

Prayer: Father, forgive me for my sins and help me to bring others to Jesus by faith, so that he may forgive and heal them, too.

One Word: Only Jesus can forgive and heal

JESUS CALLS LEVI

Mark 2:13-17

Key verse: 2:17

1. Follow me (13-14)

Tax collectors represent aggressive sinners, the kind of selfish people who get what they want by any means, regardless of who they hurt or how many enemies they make in the process. Levi the tax collector was rich--but he paid the price. He was branded as a quisling be his own people, he was probably not respected by his wife and children, and he was lonely. When Jesus called him to repent and begin a new life, he got up and followed. And he was full of joy.

2. I came to call sinners (15-17)

When Jesus was criticized for joining the joyful feast of tax collectors and sinners, he stated clearly his purpose in coming into the world. He did not come to live like a self-righteous Pharisee. He came to be a friend of sinners. He came to die for the sins of the world.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my calculating mind, and help me to hear your call and follow you simply, as Levi did.

One Word: Jesus came to call sinners.

NEW WINE; NEW WINESKINS

Mark 2:18-22

Key Verse: 2:22

1. When the Bridegroom is with us (18-20)

When some people wanted Jesus to fit into a religious mold, he hued three metaphors to teach the meaning of the gospel. Jesus is the Bridegroom. When he is with us, joy is in our hearts, no matter what the circumstances. He makes our lives like a wedding feasts. He satisfies our hearts.

2. Old garment, new patch (21)

When an old garment patched with unshrunk cloth is washed, the patch shrinks and tears the garment. Jesus' gospel cannot be used to patch up old, legalistic ways of living and thinking.

3. New wine, new wineskins (22)

Old wineskins become hard and brittle. New wine ferments and expands. If it is put in old wineskins, they will burst. Jesus' gospel changes us into new people. If we are not ready to repent and be changed, the gospel cannot be put in us.

Prayer: Lord, let the new wine of the gospel be in me. Let me stay with Jesus.

One Word: Be a new wineskin

LORD OF THE SABBATH

Mark 2:23-28

Key Verse: 2:28

1. Jesus' hungry disciples (23-24)

Jesus' disciples probably had not had breakfast, so as they passed through the grainfields one Sabbath, they plucked some raw grain and ate it. This was allowed by law (Dt 23:25). The Pharisees, however, were watching them closely, looking for a way to discredit Jesus. They criticized the disciples for harvesting grain on the Sabbath. We should not use our Bible knowledge to crush others.

2. A Bible lesson (25-28)

Jesus taught them the true meaning of the Sabbath. He used as an example David, a man after God's own heart. David was not a legalist. He loved God; he also loved people. When his men were hungry, he found a way to feed them. God gave the law to build men up--not to tear them down. Furthermore, Jesus himself is the Creator God, the Lord of the Sabbath. No one can criticize him. He is the Lord of the Sabbath and Lord of every day.

Prayer: Lord, help me study the Bible and learn from Jesus, not from the Pharisees.

One Word: Jesus Christ is Lord of all

STRETCH OUT YOUR HAND

Mark 3:1-6

Key Verse: 3:5b

1. Stand up in front of everyone (1-3)

A man with a shriveled hand was in the synagogue when Jesus came one Sabbath. He could not play the violin. He probably kept his useless hand in his pocket; he thought that he himself was useless. When Jesus came in, hope sprang up in his heart. But Jesus' enemies were there too.

They had murder on their minds. Jesus did not shrink back. When he told the man to stand up in front of everyone, he was inviting him to become vulnerable--and to trust only in Jesus.

2. Stretch out your hand (4-6)

To be healed by Jesus, he had to take his useless hand out of his pocket and expose it to everyone. He did it, and Jesus healed him. Jesus' enemies could not answer Jesus' question, nor could they say anything about his act of mercy. They did not repent, so they went out and plotted to kill Jesus. No one can be neutral before Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, help me to stand with you and stretch out my shriveled hand.

One Word: Stretch out your hand

JESUS APPOINTS TWELVE APOSTLES

Mark 3:7-19

Key Verse: 3:14

1. Jesus withdraws; the crowds follow (7-12)

Jesus risked his life to restore one man's life. He incurred the wrath of the religious leadership, and he revealed himself to be the true shepherd of Israel. So people came to him from everywhere. Each one thought his problem most urgent--so, in their eagerness, they almost pushed Jesus into the lake. He taught and healed from a small boat. Demons could not endure his presence.

2. Jesus appoints the Twelve (13-19)

Jesus spent the night in prayer (Lk 6: 12). Then he appointed 12 men to be apostles. His training course was simple: They were to be with him. Then he would send them out to preach and serve the crowds. Someday, through these men the gospel would be preached to the ends of the earth, and the good news would be passed down through history to us. Jesus concentrated on training disciples and he commands us to make disciples too.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a good disciple of Jesus; also help me to be a disciple-maker.

One Word: Disciples and disciple-makers

OPPOSITION FROM ALL SIDES

Mark 3:20-35

Key Verse: 3:34,35

1. Those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit (20-30)

When Jesus gave himself wholly to serving the crowds, he was opposed by those who hated him and by those who loved him. The Pharisees saw him driving out demons and healing the sick by the power of the Holy Spirit, but they tried to discredit his ministry, saying that Satan was his power-source. This was a lie and an insult to God. Only Jesus is strong enough to break Satan's hold on a person. Those who see God's work, but deliberately reject it and plant doubt in others are committing a sin.

2. Jesus' mother and brothers (31-35)

Jesus' family thought he was crazy to spend himself so unstintingly for the selfish crowds. When they came for him, Jesus did not even greet them. They were concerned about his human life; he was committed to God's will. Those who do God's will are his real family. Can your commitment to Jesus take precedence over all human commitments?

Prayer: Lord, defeat Satan's power in me. Help me to do your will.

One Word: Whoever does God's will is my brother

JESUS TAUGHT IN PARABLES

Mark 4:1-12

Key Verse: 4:11

1. A farmer went out to sow (1-8)

Jesus was like a farmer who sows seed. The crowd was like a field with all kinds of soil. The crowd stood on the shore, while Jesus used a small boat as a pulpit. In the parable, the seed scattered by the farmer fell on four kinds of soil. Three kinds proved unfruitful--the path was too hard, the rocky soil too shallow, the thorns too profuse. Only the seed sown on the good soil produced an abundant harvest.

2. The secret of the kingdom of God (9-12)

Most people enjoyed listening to Jesus' parables, but they did not really understand them. The Twelve were different from the crowd. They really wanted to learn, so they came and asked. To them was given the secrets of the kingdom of God. They were good soil. They had a commitment to follow Jesus and to obey him. Those without such a commitment cannot know the secrets of the kingdom of God.

Prayer: Lord, I want to follow you. Teach me the secrets of the kingdom of God.

One Word: He who has ears, let him hear

THE PARABLE EXPLAINED

Mark 4:13-20

Key Verse: 4:20

1. Unproductive heart soil (13-19)

The seed represents the word of God. Whether or not it produces a crop depends on the soil. The uncommitted heart is like a path. Such a person enjoys superficial relationships, or pseudo-intellectual ideas for his own pleasure. He never commits himself to the truth. Some hearts are like the thin soil which covers a rock: They receive the word joyfully, but don't let it change their lives. So they have no root. They don't know Jesus. When rejection or persecution arises because of the word, they wilt and give up. Hearts like the thorny soil are full of anxiety and/or worldly desires. God's word is choked and dies.

2. Good soil (20)

When we repent, prepare the soil of our hearts and accept God's word and hold on to it, a good crop is produced--30, 60 and 100 times what was sown. Each of us has all of these soils in his/her heart from time to time.

Prayer: Lord, help me to plow my heart soil with repentance until it is good soil.

One Word: Have good heart soil

A LAMP ON A STAND

Mark 4:21-25

Key Verse: 4:21

1. Put the lamp on its stand (21-23)

A lamp is lighted and put on a stand in order to drive away darkness and expose everything in the room. One who does not want to repent might want to hide the lamp under the bed. Jesus is the true light who came into the world (Jn 1:9). He came to give the light of life to all who follow him (Jn 8:12). He will come again to expose all things and judge the earth (1Th 5:2-5).

2. Consider what you hear (24-25)

God's word is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path (Ps 119:105). We must listen carefully to God's word with an inner heart decision to obey him. When we accept God's word, repent, and obey him, then our understanding grows, our love for God grows, and our faith grows. If we fail to exercise faith and love, even what we have will be taken away.

Prayer: Lord, let the light of Jesus shine into my dark heart today and every day. Help me to grow in faith and live for you. Help me to follow Jesus, the light of life.

One Word: Live in the light of Jesus

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM

Mark 4:26-34

Key Verse: 4:26

1. The parable of the seed that grows (26-29)

Jesus taught about the kingdom of God in parables. The kingdom of God is hidden in men's hearts like a seed in the earth. It is exposed when it grows and changes men and societies. When Jesus comes again, it will be fully exposed. We cannot make a seed grow. We plant it and water it, but it grows of itself, because there is life in the seed itself. When we receive the gospel, this seed of the word is planted in our hearts. It sprouts and grows and produces in us the good fruit of Jesus' character. Jesus within transforms life.

2. The parable of the mustard seed (30-34)

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed. Its beginning is small, but it grows to be very big. One person who loves Jesus and obeys God's word is such a seed. If the kingdom is in one man, then the whole campus can change; if the seed of the kingdom is in one man, the whole nation can be changed.

Prayer: Lord, may your kingdom come and your will be done in me and in my land.

One Word: The seed is growing

JESUS CALMS THE STORM

Mark 4:35-41

Key Verse: 4:40

1. Teacher, don't you care? (35-38)

Jesus was dog-tired. He had been serving the crowds all day. He and his disciples left in the boat to cross the lake. Jesus was sleeping on a cushion in the stern, when a furious squall came up and the boat was almost swamped. The disciples struggled with the storm while Jesus slept. Fear came into their hearts. They doubted Jesus' love. "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" If we doubt God's love in the storms of life, we feel desperately alone and hopeless, and fear paralyzes us.

2. Do you still have no faith? (39-41)

Jesus calmed the storm with a word. He is the Ruler of all nature, for he is the Creator. He saw the disciples' fear as a faith problem. Fear is the opposite of faith. At his rebuke, the fear of death which had paralyzed them was changed into reverent fear of God and of his Son (Pr 9:10).

Prayer: Lord, let my faith in you grow until it drives out all fear. Even in the worst storm, remind me that you love me.

One Word: Even the wind and the waves obey!

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

Mark 5:1-13

Key Verse: 5:9

1. A demon-possessed man (1-8)

Jesus and his disciples crossed the sea to Gerasa. There they met another storm--one going on inside a man. He was possessed by a legion of demons. He had lost his self-identity. He roamed among the tombs day and night, torturing himself. No one could help him. His neighbors had tried to subdue him with chains, but he could not be bound. He was free of human constraint, but he had become a prisoner of Satan. Jesus loved him and wanted to be his friend, so he asked, "What is your name?" Jesus' question and the man's answer revealed his hopeless imprisonment.

2. Jesus heals the demon-possessed man (9-13)

He knelt before Jesus, but he said, "Leave me alone." He wanted Jesus' help, but he was afraid of becoming Jesus' captive. Jesus set one soul free at the cost of 2,000 pigs. We are only truly free when we are captives of Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, you asked my name and set me free at the cost of your own life. I am yours.

One Word: What is my name?

GO, TELL HOW MUCH THE LORD HAS DONE

Mark 5:14-20

Key Verse: 5:19

1. They heard about the man and the pigs (14-17)

The people of the town heard about the pigs. They came and saw the man who had terrified the neighborhood by his violent behavior sitting there, clothed and in his right mind. What an

amazing change! But they didn't care about the man; they heard about the pigs and they were afraid of further material loss. They might have brought the sick and demon-possessed of the town to Jesus, but instead they asked Jesus to leave. Jesus never stays where he is not welcome.

2. Go, tell what the Lord has done for you (18-20)

The man wanted to go with Jesus. Perhaps he was tired of that heartless, materialistic region. But Jesus gave him a mission. He sent him back to tell his family and friends about God's mercy and grace in his life. He obeyed Jesus and went. He had become a servant of Jesus and a free man.

Prayer: Lord, help me to value people more than things; help me to tell the world about your grace and mercy.

One Word: Go and tell God's mercy

WHO TOUCHED ME?

Mark 5:21-34

Key Verse: 5:34

1. Jairus' plea (21-24a)

Jairus was a synagogue ruler. He was rich and influential. But his precious daughter was dying. His wealth could not help her. He abandoned his pride and came and fell at Jesus' feet. Jesus never refuses a humble plea for mercy.

2. A nameless woman (24b-29)

The woman who came to Jesus was poor and sick. She was ceremonially unclean. No one could help her. In her desperation, she came to Jesus. She believed that if she could but touch his cloak, she could be healed--and she was!

3. Who touched me? (30-34)

Jesus was in a hurry. But he took time to meet this woman. She needed to confess God's grace in her life. She needed to meet Jesus personally. She needed his word of love and blessing.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for accepting me when I come to you just as I am. Thank you for your grace in my life.

One Word: Go in peace and be free

DON'T BE AFRAID; JUST BELIEVE

Mark 5:35-43

Key Verse: 5:36

1. Don't bother the teacher any more (35-36)

While Jesus talked with the nameless woman, precious moments slipped by. Bad news came to Jairus--and with it, bad advice. Jesus ignored the messenger's good intentions and bad advice, and planted faith in Jairus. He encouraged Jairus: "Don't be afraid; just believe." Fear is the opposite of faith. Jairus took Jesus' words into his heart and ignored the advice of the men who came from his home. This is Jesus' word to us today: "Don't be afraid; just believe."

2. She is not dead but asleep (37-43)

Jesus put out those who laughed in unbelief. He took three disciples and the child's parents, and went in to where the child was. She stood up at his command. She was well. His word is almighty. He is the Creator God and the Giver of life. He understands and loves. And he knows teenagers' hearts. He told them to give her something to eat.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my fear and doubt, and help me to walk with "just believing" faith today.

One Word: Don't be afraid; just believe

A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR

Mark 6:1-6a

Key Verse: 6:6a

1. Those who heard him were amazed (1,2a)

When Jesus went to his hometown, Nazareth, and taught in the synagogue there, people were amazed at his wisdom and power. It was their opportunity to accept him and receive God's blessing.

2. Isn't this the carpenter? (2b-6a)

They closed their eyes and hearts to the spiritual reality he embodied. They saw him from a human, physical point of view. They knew his family--his mother and his brothers and sisters. They remembered when he had worked there as a carpenter. So they didn't accept his words. Jesus saw their problem as a problem of unbelief. When we look at God's servant or at God's word or at God's work from a human point of view rather than with the eyes of faith, we cannot receive the blessing God wants to give us. Jesus needs an environment of faith in order to do his work.

Prayer: Lord, give me the eyes of faith to see your hand working in my own life and in the lives of others.

One Word: Hear God's word with faith

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

Mark 6:6b-13

Key Verse: 6:7

1. Authority over evil spirits (6b-7)

Jesus sent his twelve disciples on an evangelistic journey. It was part of their training to be apostles. He gave them power to conquer the rule of Satan in the lives of men; he gave them the authority to drive out evil spirits.

2. Take nothing for the journey (8-11)

They were to depend on God for all their material needs. When they entered a village, they were not to shop around for a better place to stay, but remain and bless the house that first received them.

3. They preached that men should repent (12-13)

They healed the sick and drove out demons. But the main work of their mission was to call people to repentance. Each person must repent of sin if he is to welcome Jesus the Savior into his life.

Prayer: Lord, though I live in a godless society, help me to be Jesus' disciple and to learn from him how to be a disciple-maker. Give me repentance and courage to preach repentance and forgiveness.

One Word: Make disciples for Jesus

A KING RULED BY GUILT AND FEAR

Mark 6:14-29

Key Verse: 6:20

1. King Herod's fear (14-16)

King Herod had murdered John; he had a guilty conscience. So when he heard about Jesus, he remembered his evil deed. He was superstitious and fearful, thinking that Jesus was John reincarnated. Being a king didn't assuage his fear and guilt.

2. King Herod's terrible deed (17-29)

Mark also remembered John. John was a righteous man who preached repentance and announced the coming of Jesus. When John told Herod to repent of his adulterous life, the king and the woman he lived with became angry and put him in prison. Finally, because of his pride and lack of moral fiber, Herod had John beheaded. Herod knew what was right and what was wrong, but he lived before men, not before God--so he committed a great sin. How miserable were the people who lived under such a shepherd!

Prayer: Lord, help me to live before you and do what is right. When I sin, give me the faith and courage to repent.

One Word: Don't live in fear and guilt--repent

SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD

Mark 6:30-34

Key Verse: 6:34

1. “Come to a quiet place and rest” (30-32)

Pressure on Jesus and his disciples was increasing. Herod's execution of John underlined the danger of preaching the gospel. This event also revealed the quality of the political and religious leadership of those times. The apostles returned from their evangelistic journey. They were tired, for they had served many people. Jesus wanted to spend some time alone with them, so they got in a boat and went to a quiet place.

2. Like sheep with a shepherd (33-34)

The crowds, seeking a true shepherd, saw them leave and ran on foot. They arrived at the “quiet place” first. The crowds were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus had compassion on them. He gave up his own plans and taught the crowds many things.

They needed God's righteous rule in their lives.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus my true shepherd. He laid down his life for me and for the world. Raise up men and women who have Jesus' shepherd's heart for the young people of our time.

One Word: Like sheep without a shepherd

YOU GIVE THEM SOMETHING TO EAT

Mark 6:35-44

Key Verse: 6:37a

1. You give them something to eat (35-37)

Jesus' disciples were tired and hungry, but the crowds lingered, and Jesus taught on and on. Finally it became late, so they came to Jesus with a reasonable suggestion. See verses 35-36. The people should take care of themselves. Jesus, however, countered with an unreasonable command: "You give them something to eat." They immediately reacted: "It costs too much!" But Jesus wanted them to learn a sense of responsibility and his shepherd's heart. He wanted them to learn that everything he commands can be done, if they have faith.

2. How many loaves do you have? (38-44)

They took stock of their resources and found only five loaves and two fish. But they brought these to Jesus. When Jesus gave thanks and broke the loaves and distributed them, along with the fish, to all the people, there was enough–with some left over.

Prayer: Lord, here are my loaves and fish. Please use them and me in your work of world salvation.

One Word: You give them something to eat

JESUS WALKS ON WATER

Mark 6:45-56

Key Verse: 6:50b

1. Jesus prays alone (45-46)

Jesus fed the crowd, and then he dismissed them. He sent his disciples across the lake by boat and he went up on a mountainside alone to pray. This was a time of spiritual struggle for him. The disciples' faith was very young. Satan's temptations to worldly power were strong. The moral corruption of the political and religious leaders influenced all people, and people's hearts were hard because of sin. So Jesus prayed.

2. Storm training and a lesson in faith (47-56)

The disciples in the boat didn't make much progress crossing the lake; the wind was against them. Just before dawn he went out to them, walking on the water. They were struggling to row; they had quickly forgotten how he had fed the crowd. They didn't recognize him and they were terrified. He said, "Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid." And he got in the boat. When they reached the shore the crowds were waiting to welcome their true Shepherd.

Prayer: Lord, come into the small boat of my life as the Captain and Navigator.

One Word: Only Jesus can calm the storm

THE COMMANDS OF GOD OR THE RULES OF MEN

Mark 7:1-23

Key Verse: 6b,7

1. Hearts far from God and his word (1-13)

The Pharisees knew the Bible, but they lived according to the rules and traditions of their culture. They were religious, but they did not know God or love him from the heart. So they saw sin as only a moral and religious problem. They criticized Jesus' disciples for not observing handwashing ceremonies. Jesus taught both them and his disciples that the root of sin is found in a selfish heart that has no room for God, no obedience of his word and no love for mankind. He gave an example of how they manipulated the law--even the Ten Commandments--to suit their convenience and feed their selfishness.

2. What really defiles a person? (14-23)

Jesus spoke to the crowd and explained in detail to his dull disciples. It is the corrupted heart that defiles a person. If the heart is full of evil, the thoughts we think, the words we speak, and the acts we do defile us and pollute our society.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse my corrupted heart by the blood of Jesus. Help me to love you, obey your word, and love my neighbors.

One Word: Love God; hold on to his word

THE FAITH OF ONE WOMAN

Mark 7:24-30

Key Verse: 7:28

1. First let the children eat (24-27)

Jesus was avoiding confrontation with the Pharisees and avoiding the crowds because he did not have much time to train his disciples. He retreated to Tyre, which is in Gentile territory. But he was famous and could not keep his presence secret. A Gentile woman came to him with a desperate problem--her little daughter was demon-possessed. She begged Jesus' help. Jesus tested her faith. He had come as the Shepherd of Israel, and she was a Gentile "dog." She had no claim on God's grace. His first responsibility was to seek the lost sheep of Israel.

2. Even the dogs eat the children's crumbs (28-30)

She humbly accepted Jesus' hard words and asked his mercy and help anyway. She said, "Yes, I'm a Gentile 'dog', but even the dogs eat the children's crumbs." Jesus was moved by her humble faith and blessed her and her daughter.

Prayer: Lord, I come to you anyway, seeking only your mercy.

One Word: Seek God with humble faith

JESUS RETURNS TO THE DECAPOLIS

Mark 7:31-37

Key Verse: 7:32

1. Good neighbors (31-32)

When Jesus had been in the region of the Decapolis before, he had healed a demon-possessed man at the cost of the local pig industry. The people asked him to leave. The healed man, however, proclaimed Jesus' love and power throughout the Decapolis (Mk 5). People changed. Their hard hearts melted. This time they brought a seriously handicapped man to Jesus for healing.

2. "Be opened" (33-37)

The man had a communication problem. Jesus healed him quietly, away from the crowd. Jesus understood this man's agony. One mark of the Messianic kingdom is that the deaf will hear and the dumb will speak (Isa 35:5,6). The people were amazed. They couldn't help but spread the news. Living in a foreign land or in a different culture sometimes makes us like this deaf-mute. When Jesus touches our hearts and loosens our tongues, we may proclaim his gospel to the world.

Prayer: Lord, open my ears to hear your voice; touch my tongue so that I may praise your name.

One Word: Ephphatha!

JESUS FEEDS THE FOUR THOUSAND

Mark 8:1-21

Key Verse: 8:2a

1. I have compassion for these people (1-10)

Jesus was still in the area of the Decapolis (7:31). A large, spiritually hungry crowd gathered. After three days, they were physically hungry, too. Jesus wanted to feed them. The disciples still thought more about their own limits than about Jesus' power. They still let hard situations rob

them of compassion. Again Jesus took what they had--a few fish and loaves--and blessed it and gave it to the disciples to feed the crowd. It was enough; there were seven large basketfuls left over. Jesus' love finds a way.

2. Don't you remember? (11-21)

They crossed the lake and were greeted by sign-seeking Pharisees. Jesus sighed deeply, refused them a sign, and crossed the lake again. Jesus' real concern, however, was for his disciples. They were so easily influenced by the unbelief of the times. Even though Jesus had fed two multitudes, they were still worried about bread. So Jesus gave them a little quiz to help them remember his power and love.

Prayer: Lord, teach me your love that finds a way. Show me my loaves and fish.

One Word: Remember God's compassion and power

THE HEALING OF A BLIND MAN

Mark 8:22-26

Key Verse: 8:25

1. The blind man of Bethsaida (22-24)

The people of Bethsaida brought a blind man to Jesus. Bethsaida was in Galilee. It was the hometown of Peter, Andrew and Philip. This event follows Jesus' words to his disciples, "Do you still not understand?" (21) They were still spiritually blind. Jesus took the man outside the village, spit on his eyes and put his hands on him. The healing began, but when Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?" the man confessed, "I see people, but they look like walking trees!" He was like the disciples who loved and followed Jesus, but who didn't fully realize who he was or believe his power.

2. Once more... (25-26)

Jesus is not satisfied with partial sight--or partial faith. Once more he put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened and he could see everything clearly. Jesus did not give up on his disciples either. In the next event, Peter's spiritual eyes opened and he made a life-changing confession of faith.

Prayer: Lord, open my eyes to see you and other people clearly.

One Word: Jesus opens blind eyes

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Mark 8:27-30

Key Verse: 8:29

1. Who do people say I am? (27-28)

Jesus wanted to teach his disciples that he was the Messiah, the only Savior, the very Son of God. Only those who have a personal relationship with Jesus can know who he really is. The crowds knew that Jesus was a man sent from God. They had seen his miracles and heard his teachings. They came to him for his help and blessing. They longed for his shepherd's love. But they believed in him in their own way, so they did not really know him.

2. But who do you say I am? (29-30)

Peter confessed, "You are the Christ." This meant, "You are the Son of God, my Savior and Lord" (Mt 16). The disciples had come to know Jesus by being with him. They had left everything and committed their lives to him. They loved him; they came to know, not just with their heads but with their hearts as well, that he is the promised Messiah, the Giver of life. We can know him only when make a conscious decision to commit our lives to him and obey him.

Prayer: Lord, help me to spend time with you until I can make Peter's confession my own.

One Word: Jesus is my Savior and Lord

THE THINGS OF GOD

Mark 8:31-33

Key Verse: 8:31

1. The Son of Man must suffer (31)

Peter confessed Jesus to be the Christ, but he and the other disciples did not know the nature of Jesus' Messiahship. So Jesus began to teach about his death and resurrection. This is the heart of the gospel, for Jesus came to save us from sin and death and, in obedience to God's will, this was how he did it.

2. Get behind me, Satan! (32-33)

Peter loved Jesus in his own way; he could not accept Jesus' words about his suffering. So he rebuked Jesus. Jesus used strong language to rebuke Peter--he called him "Satan." From the beginning of Jesus' ministry, Satan had tempted him to avoid the cross. But Jesus had made a decision to stand on God's side and obey God's will. Anyone who does not stand on God's side but tries to find some “crossless,” middle way is on Satan's side.

Prayer: Lord, I believe that your death and resurrection were for me. Help me to have in mind the things of God and stand on your side, so that I may not follow Satan's clever lies.

One Word: Jesus died and rose for me.

FOR JESUS AND THE GOSPEL

Mark 8:34-38

Key Verse: 8:34

1. If anyone would come after me (34-37)

One does not have to be one of the Twelve to be a disciple of Jesus. A disciple of Jesus is anyone who follows Jesus in Jesus' way. What is Jesus' way? First, it is to deny oneself. This means giving up our own stubborn ideas and accepting Jesus' way of thinking and living as our own. Second, it is to take up one's cross. This means that one puts aside the burden of ego and selfishness and takes the mission Jesus gives him. Third, it means following Jesus. To follow Jesus is to learn his humble mind and character through prayer and obedient Bible study. It means to choose to do Jesus' will and live with Jesus' lifestyle.

2. If anyone is ashamed of me and my words (38)

Jesus' death on the cross was shameful. Jesus' words run counter to the ways of thinking and living of this adulterous generation. But Jesus' people must share in his suffering to share in his glory.

Prayer: Lord, help me to deny myself, take my cross of mission and follow you. Help me not to be ashamed of you.

One Word: Lose your life to save it

HE WAS TRANSFIGURED BEFORE THEM

Mark 9:1-13

Key Verse: 9:7

1. The transfigured Jesus (1-4)

Jesus took his three top disciples up the mountain. He gave them a preview of his resurrection and of his glorious heavenly image. Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets, talked with him. They talked with him about his approaching death on the cross and encouraged him to be faithful to God's mission (Lk 9:30,31).

2. Listen to him (5-8)

Peter and the others were frightened. He blurted out their real desire for ease and glory (5). Then a cloud enveloped them. God himself proclaimed Jesus as his Son, whom he loved, and commanded the disciples and us to "listen to him."

3. Coming down the mountain (9-13)

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus again spoke of his resurrection, and of his suffering and death. John the Baptist, a type of Elijah, had already suffered and had been killed by Herod.

Prayer: Lord, help me to listen to you, even when what you say is not what I like to hear.

One Word: Remember his glory; obey him

NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

Mark 9:14-29

Key Verse: 9:23

1. What are you arguing about? (14-18)

When Jesus came down the mountain, the crowds were glad to see him. His disciples were arguing with some unbelieving scribes, while a distraught father and his pathetic son stood there, watching helplessly. Controversies and pointless arguments are a sign that faith has run out. Satan tormented the boy and put the fear of death in his father's heart.

2. Bring the boy to me (19-29)

Jesus sighed because of the unbelief of his times, and because of his faithless disciples. The boy seemed to get worse after he was brought to Jesus, but the father with all of his doubts still trusted Jesus. He begged, "If you can do anything, take pity on us..." Jesus offered something better than pity. He planted faith in the father through his rebuke, and he healed the boy. The disciples had failed because they had depended on themselves--they had not prayed. Lack of prayer reveals lack of faith.

Prayer: Lord, everything is surely possible for you; teach me to pray.

One Word: Believe and pray

WELCOMING JESUS INTO OUR LIVES

Mark 9:30-37

Key Verse: 9:37

1. The Son of Man will be killed (30-32)

Jesus continued to teach his disciples about his approaching death and resurrection. This was the reason he came: to purchase men for God by his blood. But the disciples didn't understand this. It was hard for them to accept Jesus' gospel teaching, for they were too concerned about human glory and their own future security.

2. Who is the greatest? (33-37)

Jesus was teaching about the cross; they were arguing about human greatness. So Jesus taught them how to be great! First, the great man is the one who serves everyone else. Second, the great man is humble enough to welcome a child in Jesus' name. Third, a great man receives Jesus himself, humbly and unconditionally, as one welcomes a child. When we welcome Jesus, he forgives our sins. God comes to dwell in our hearts.

Prayer: Lord, plant your gospel in my heart. Help me to serve others because I have welcomed you into my heart.

One Word: Welcome humble Jesus

SALTY CHRISTIANS

Mark 9:38-50

Key Verse: 9:50

1. A cup of water in Jesus' name (38-41)

Some people think that there is a spiritual "no-man's land" between God and Satan. But Jesus teaches differently. One who drives out demons in Jesus' name is on Jesus' side. One who gives a cup of cold water to Jesus' disciple is on God's side. We may have little in common humanly with some people, but if they love Jesus and fight the devil, we are on the same side.

2. Causing others to sin (42-50)

A Christian must have a clear attitude about sin. Jesus allows no compromise. One who causes another to sin is working for Satan. He or she should repent. Sin brings a person to death and hell, so we must fight sin with all our strength. Cutting off a hand doesn't cleanse a sinful heart; only the blood of Jesus can do that. A Christian with unrepented sins in his or her life is tasteless salt, fit only to be thrown out. Sin keeps us from being at peace with each other. It keeps us from being at peace with ourselves.

Prayer: Lord, cleanse my heart and give me an absolute attitude toward the gospel.

One Word: Be a salty Christian

MARRIAGE IS FOR KEEPS

Mark 10:1-12

Key Verse: 10:9

1. Is divorce lawful? (1-5)

The men who raised this question had adultery in their hearts; but their immediate motive was to make Jesus deny the authority of the Bible. They pointed out that Moses' law permits divorce. Jesus reminded them that Moses' law actually discouraged divorce. Through Moses' law, God was training slaves to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. Many of the regulations spoke to a particular time and situation, and in Jesus' time were obsolete (Lev 11).

2. What God has joined together (6-12)

Jesus went back to Genesis 2 to find God's original purpose in creating marriage. According to Jesus, marriage is not just a contract between two people who decide to live together for their mutual benefit. It is a union created by God. So it is a three-party contract–man, woman and God. To divorce and remarry is a sin against God. One who does this must repent. The disciples were surprised by the Bible's and Jesus' view of marriage, so they asked him about it again.

Prayer: Lord, your word is truth. Teach me how to live by it. Help me to be faithful.

One Word: God has joined them together

LIKE A LITTLE CHILD

Mark 10:13-16

Key Verse: 10:15

1. Jesus welcomes children (13-14)

Jesus' disciples thought that Jesus was too busy to spend time with children. Children are powerless. They don't bring in any revenue. They couldn't even understand Jesus' teachings. These children didn't seem to need anything in particular. Their parents just wanted Jesus to touch and bless them. But Jesus welcomed them. Parents today should also bring their children and their sheep to Jesus.

2. Receive the kingdom like a child (15-16)

The children received Jesus' touch of blessing without any reservations or questions. When he took them in his arms, they were happy. They trusted him and received his love. The disciples were pragmatists looking for immediate benefit. They dealt with people politically and struggled

with them humanly. They were full of calculations. We must come to Jesus like children, joyfully, knowing that when Jesus touches our lives, we are blessed.

Prayer: Lord, I come to you today like a child. Touch me, and I will be blessed.

One Word: Come to Jesus like a child

TO INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE

Mark 10:17-31

Key Verse: 10:21

1. One thing you lack (17-22)

The rich young man thought he was good because he had kept the commandments. But he knew that did not have eternal life. Jesus showed him that he was not good, for he did not love his neighbor as himself. He needed to repent and come to Jesus, the Savior. Jesus invited him to follow him and live a life of discipleship. But he went away sad. He thought he would give up too much, so he lost everything.

2. With God all things are possible (23-31)

Jesus' disciples were shocked at Jesus' comment. Who, then, is good enough to be saved? Jesus answered, “No one.” No one can save himself. Salvation is a gift from God. It is indeed hard for men to trust in God rather than in themselves or in their possessions. Even Jesus' disciples, who had left homes and jobs to follow Jesus, could not earn eternal life. But God gives his life freely to all who come with repentant hearts to trust and follow Jesus.

Prayer: Lord, I cannot save myself, so I come to you. I want to follow Jesus and receive the life he gives.

One Word: God gives eternal life and real treasures

THE SON OF MAN CAME TO SERVE

Mark 10:32-45

Key Verse: 10:45

1. The power of the gospel (32-34)

Jesus was going to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world. The disciples were frightened by his quiet determination. Once more Jesus told them that he must die a shameful death--and that he would rise again in three days. This is the heart of the gospel. This gospel is the power of God for salvation (Ro 1:16).

2. Jesus came to serve and give his life (35-45)

The disciples didn't understand that Jesus had come to give his life as a ransom sacrifice. They still had dreams of the power and glory of an earthly messianic kingdom. His cup was the cup of suffering, and his baptism, the baptism of death. They thought they were ready to die with him, but when the moment of truth came at his arrest, they all ran away. Jesus taught them that true greatness is being like Jesus--not like Caesar. The life of a disciple must be serving and life-giving, for Jesus came to give his life.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for Jesus who gave his life for me. Help me to live a giving, serving, loving life for his sake.

One Word: To give his life

BLIND BARTIMAEUS

Mark 10:46-52

Key Verse: 10:51

1. Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! (46-48)

Bartimaeus believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of David. He believed that the Messiah had come to have mercy on blind people like himself. When Jesus passed by, he shouted and shouted. He refused to be silenced. We must not allow our faith to be discouraged by well-meaning people around us.

2. What do you want me to do for you? (49-52)

Jesus had asked this same question to two spiritually blind disciples. Their request was not based on God's promises (36-37). Bartimaeus' request was. He said, "Lord, I want to see." He believed that Jesus was the Messiah about whom Isaiah had prophesied (Isa 35:5). He believed that Jesus had the power and compassion to give him his sight. Jesus never refuses one who comes to him in faith, asking mercy. Jesus healed him and blessed him because of his faith.

Prayer: Lord, have mercy on me. Give me spiritual sight and your Holy Spirit so that I may serve you and your people.

One Word: “I want to see”

HOSANNA TO THE KING

Mark 11:1-10

Key Verse: 11:3

1. The Lord needs it (1-6)

Jesus trained his disciples to obey his words. They went and borrowed a colt from an unknown person; their credit card was Jesus' word, "The Lord needs it and will send it back shortly." This was enough. Even though they did not fully understand just why Jesus needed the colt, they obeyed and brought it to Jesus.

2. Hosanna--Save, Lord! (7-10)

Jesus gave a dramatic demonstration of his Messiahship by acting out the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9. In this way he announced that he is King and Christ. He is a gentle and humble king who rules with righteousness and peace; he is accessible to humble people. The people recognized him and testified to his Messiahship in their shouts, "Hosanna! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!"

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are my King. I welcome you into my heart with a glad “Hosanna!” Give me simple, "The Lord needs it" faith so that I may serve you.

One Word: The Lord needs it

A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL NATIONS

Mark 11:11-19

Key Verse: 11:17

1. The temple and fig tree (11-14)

Jesus entered the city like a king coming to be enthroned. But he did not go to the palace; he went to the temple. He looked around and left. He did not like what he saw. The next day, on his way back, he encountered a beautiful and promising fig tree. But when he inspected it closely, he found no fruit. He took away forever the tree's privilege of bearing fruit. The fruitless fig tree is a vivid parable of God's disappointment at the fruitlessness of a prayerless people.

2. A house of prayer or a den of robbers (15-19)

Jesus went back to the temple and cleared out all the business activities. When the place of prayer becomes a place of business, the soul of the nation is very sick. God is concerned about all nations, so his house must be a place of prayer for all nations.

Prayer: Lord, help me to pray with an uncluttered heart and mind. Help us to be a church that prays and works for the evangelization of all nations.

One Word: Be fruitful and stay alive

HAVE FAITH IN GOD

Mark 11:20-26

Key Verse: 11:22

1. The withered fig tree (20-22)

Peter was surprised to see that the fruitless fig tree which Jesus cursed had withered from its roots. His surprise was an indication that he had not taken the words of Jesus very seriously. Jesus saw this as a faith problem. The religious leaders who bore no fruit for God also had a faith problem. Jesus' answer, "Have faith in God," is for all of us. Jesus challenges us to have mountain-moving faith. He wants us to bear fruit that pleases him.

2. Faith and prayer (23-26)

Faith is not only expressed in obedient actions; faith in God is expressed in prayer. If we cast doubt out of our hearts and pray, God will surely answer. If we hold a grudge against anyone in our hearts, our prayer-channel to God is blocked. We must repent; we must forgive. We must accept Jesus' grace of forgiveness. We must pray, believing that God has already answered.

Prayer: Lord, I believe that you are almighty. Cleanse my heart of sin and help me to forgive others.

One Word: Have faith in God

BY WHAT AUTHORITY

Mark 11:27-33

Key Verse: 11:29,30

1. By what authority? (27-28)

Jesus' authority came from God. His authority is confirmed by the witness of Scripture, by his life-giving work of healing, and, ultimately, by his resurrection from the dead. The chief priests and teachers of the law were jealous and fearful because of Jesus' power and popularity. They did not want to submit to his authority as the Christ. So they tried to undermine his authority. There are those today who want to receive Jesus' grace while denying his Lordship. This cannot be.

2. Jesus' answer (29-33)

John, martyred by Herod, was acknowledged to be a prophet. He had testified that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, sent by God to forgive sins and to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus countered the question of the hypocritical religious leaders with a question of his own. He asked them the source of John's authority. They refused to answer. They had no regard for the truth.

Prayer: Lord, you are Savior and Lord. Help me to obey you in every area of my life.

One Word: Jesus has all authority

THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS

Mark 12:1-12

Key Verse: 12:2

1. The owner and the tenants (1-8)

This parable was about the Pharisees (12) and Israel. It is also about the human race. God made a beautiful world for mankind whom he created. But man did not want to acknowledge God's ownership. God prepared a homeland for Israel, but Israel didn't worship him. The tenants were selfish and didn't want to share any fruit with the Owner. God wanted his people to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests, but they only wanted to "enjoy." So they shamed or killed the prophets who came to call them to repent. Soon they would kill Jesus, the Son. But that's not the end of the story. The day of God's wrath would come. Jesus trusted God.

2. The Rejected Stone (9-12)

God is not thwarted by people's unfaithfulness. He took the Rejected Stone, Jesus, and made him the cornerstone of a new Israel, the capstone of his redemptive history. God still uses rejected stones; he still does marvelous things to accomplish his purpose of world salvation.

Prayer: Lord, you are the Sovereign Owner of my life. Help me to offer good and pleasing fruit to you.

One Word: Give the fruit of an obedient life to God

GIVE TO GOD WHAT IS GOD'S

Mark 12:13-17

Key Verse: 12:17

1. Whose portrait is this? (13-16)

Jesus' enemies joined forces to entangle him. They wanted to prove that he was an anti-government radical. The Pharisees and Herodians flattered him to put him off guard, and then asked him about paying taxes. No one likes to pay taxes. But Jesus held up a Roman coin, stamped with the image of Caesar. The coin belonged to Rome. Taxes should be paid. Christians should be good citizens. Jesus' challenge to Rome was not a materialistic challenge. He challenges all worldly power with his spiritual authority.

2. Give to God what is God's (17)

What is God's? We are God's, for he made us and stamped us with his image. The fruit of the vineyard belongs to God, for he is the owner. The religious and political leaders who only enjoyed their privileges, while ignoring their basic responsibilities, must give God what belongs to him.

Prayer: Lord, I belong to you, for you are my Creator and Redeemer. Give me faith to give to you what belongs to you. And also help me to be a good citizen.

One Word: Render to God what is God's

THE SCRIPTURES AND THE POWER OF GOD

Mark 12:18-27

Key Verse: 12:27

1. No marriage in heaven (18-23)

The Sadducees were the top leaders in the Jewish religion, yet they did not believe in heaven or in hell, nor in spiritual reality. They were trying to entrap Jesus when they asked a question about a hypothetical woman who followed the levirate law and married seven brothers, successively. The Sadducees' question, "In the resurrection, whose wife would she be?" reveals their ignorance--and their preoccupation with death and sex. Spiritual reality cannot be understood in physical terms. No earthly joy can add to the joy of heaven. There is no need for physical marriage in heaven.

2. God of the living (24-27)

Jesus saw their deeper problem: They did not believe the Scriptures or the power of God. God is living. He is the Giver of life. The Bible teaches that the patriarchs who have left this world are still alive and are with God in heaven (Ex 3). Our hope is in the living God.

Prayer: Lord, teach me your word and your almighty resurrection power.

One Word: God of Abraham; God of the living; my God

THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

Mark 12:28-34

Key Verse: 12:30

1. The most important commandment (28-31)

The lawyer who asked Jesus which commandment was most important was sincere. Jesus' answer is in three parts: First, the Lord our God is one. I must worship God alone. He does not accept worship from a divided, idolatrous heart. Second, I must love him with all my heart and mind and soul and strength. Third, I must love my neighbors. My thoughts and affections must be filled with love for God; my soul must be his dwelling place; my strength must be used for him--for his work and his glory. If I love God with all my heart, how can I have any left over for my neighbor--or for my spouse or children? God's arithmetic is different from man's; only if I love God can I overcome my selfishness and really love my family, friends and neighbors.

2. You are not far from the kingdom (32-34)

The teacher of the law accepted Jesus' words. He knew that loving God and loving one's neighbor was more important than religious ritual.

Prayer: Lord, help me to love you more, so that I can love others rightly.

One Word: Love God; love your neighbor

WHOSE SON IS THE CHRIST?

Mark 12:35-40

Key Verse: 12:37

1. David called him Lord (35-37)

Jesus silenced the hypocritical teachers of the law who had tried to trap him with their questions. Then he asked them a question: Whose son is the Christ? They knew that the Christ must be a descendant of King David, for this was God's promise (2Sa 7:12,16). He would be the true shepherd of his people (Eze 34:23). But he would be more. He would be God himself, coming to dwell with his people. Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1. Here, King David calls the Messiah "Lord." The Messiah would not be just David's descendant--he would be David's Lord. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords.

2. Watch out for the teachers of the law (38-40)

Those who study and teach the Bible but do not welcome and obey the King of kings will be punished most severely by God. Those whose religion is only seen on a bumper sticker or in a cross on a chain, or in long, pointless prayers or in superficial Bible study reports cannot please God.

Prayer: Lord, help me to acknowledge your lordship in every area of my life.

One Word: Jesus is Christ the Lord

THE WIDOW'S OFFERING

Mark 12:41-44

Key Verse: 12:44

1. The offering of the rich (41)

Jesus was teaching in the temple. He had warned his disciples about trying to become great men by dressing in fancy clothes. Now he sat watching the crowd putting their money in the temple treasury. Jesus was interested in the people's giving, because giving is a spiritual thermometer. The way people use their money tells where their hearts are. The rich people threw in large amounts of money, but it was money left over after they had bought all the things they felt they needed. There was no sacrifice and no love for God in their giving.

2. The poor widow's offering (42-44)

Jesus was moved when a poor widow offered two small coins, for she gave out of her poverty, not out of her wealth. He didn't look at the amount of money, but at the amount of sacrifice. She could offer because she did not depend on money. Rather, she loved God and depended on him. She gave the most.

Prayer: Lord, help me to offer you the first and best, not the leftovers.

One Word: Love God and give him the best

THE GOSPEL MUST FIRST BE PREACHED

Mark 13:1-13

Key Verse: 13:10

1. What magnificent buildings! (1-2)

Jesus' disciples were country boys. They were impressed by the beauty and strength of the temple. It seemed so permanent. People long for permanence, but nothing in this world is permanent. One thing is sure: Jesus will come again to judge the world and to establish his glorious kingdom.

2. Stand firm (3-13)

Jesus' disciples wanted to know the time of the final judgment; they wanted to know the signs. Jesus did not tell them the time, for they and we must be ready anytime. He told them about many signs of his coming. He said that we must watch out for false Christs and not be deceived. When fearful calamities happen, we must not allow fear to get into our hearts. When we are accused and stand before powerful authorities or security guards, or when our family members oppose our faith, we must stand firm to the end. We must diligently proclaim the gospel to all nations, for this is what our Lord commanded.

Prayer: Lord, help me to stand firmly on your side and use me in your great world mission task.

One Word: Stand firm in gospel faith

ON CLOUDS OF GLORY

Mark 13:14-27

Key Verse: 13:26

1. For the sake of the elect (14-20)

The "abomination that causes desolation" stands for the inversion of creation order. The defiling of the temple is a vivid expression of this (Da 9:27; 168 BC). Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD when the temple was destroyed and the streets of Jerusalem ran with blood. This event was a portent of the end, when Jesus will come again to judge the living and the dead. There will be a time of tribulation at the end of the age, but God, who has ultimate control of history, will shorten the time for the sake of his elect.

2. The Son of Man will come (21-27)

The worst danger to God's people is not physical or even psychological suffering. It is the subtle cleverness of those who deceive. Satan is a deceiver. He still tries to deceive God's people. So we must be on our guard. We must not put our hope in anyone or anything except Jesus. Jesus will come in glory, with the holy angels. Everyone will know it. We must not give our hearts to anyone but him.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be ready to welcome you when you come again. Guard my heart from the deceptions of the world.

One Word: Jesus will come in glory

THE LESSON OF THE FIG TREE

Mark 13:28-37

Key Verse: 13:31

1. My words will never pass away (28-31)

When trees bud and flowers push up through the earth, we know that summer is near. We can also know that Jesus' coming is near when we see the signs mentioned in this chapter: wars, earthquakes, deception, persecution, times of suffering and distress. He gave his word that he would return. He will keep his promise. Everything else will pass away, but God's word will never pass away.

2. Keep watch (32-37)

Jesus left us, his servants, with his work to do until his return. No one knows when he will return except God the Father. So we should not speculate about when Jesus will come again. Rather, we must be ready to meet him. We must be found doing the work he has given us to do. We must work hard at our appointed tasks. And we must give the gospel to a sinsick world, so that all of his elect may know and believe and be saved at his coming. We must be alert and working hard, ready for him to appear.

Prayer: Lord, I believe your word of promise. Help me to do your work faithfully until Jesus comes.

One Word: Jesus keeps his word; I must preach it

A BEAUTIFUL THING

Mark 14:1-11

Key Verse: 14:6b

1. The broken alabaster jar (1-3)

Jesus' death approached. In the dark night of jealousy, hatred and murderous plots, this beautiful act of love shines like a bright star. Jesus was at a dinner party in the home of Simon. Suddenly, an uninvited guest came in. She ignored hostile stares and came to Jesus. She was carrying a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume. It was her treasure. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus' head. She reserved nothing for herself. She poured out her whole heart to Jesus.

2. She did what she could (4-11)

Some of those present rebuked her. They thought that her act was wasteful. But Jesus accepted her and her act. He drew this event into gospel history. She had anointed him for burial, for he would soon break his own alabaster jar and pour out his life-blood for the sins of the world. The poor of every age have been served by those redeemed by the blood of Jesus–not by the cynics who criticize.

Prayer: Lord, help me love enough to do what I can do for you in any situation.

One Word: A beautiful thing

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Mark 14:12-26

Key Verse: 14:24

1. Preparing to eat the Passover (12-16)

Jesus sent two disciples to prepare the place and the meal. It was a secret place, because Jesus did not want anything to interfere with his eating the Passover with his disciples.

2. One will betray me (17-21)

Jesus loved even his betrayer to the end. Every man has in him the seed of betrayal. Jesus' words (18) made every disciple examine himself. Jesus' life and death were in God's hands. But the man who becomes a tool of Satan because of his own unbelief suffers beyond description.

3. The blood of the covenant (22-26)

Jesus used the bread and wine of the Passover meal to teach the meaning of his death. His shed blood seals the new covenant between God and all people who receive Jesus, who believe in his name. By his shed blood we are forgiven and made right with God.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the new covenant, sealed in Jesus' blood. Help me to be faithful to you.

One Word: The blood of the covenant

JESUS PREDICTS PETER'S DENIAL

Mark 14:27-31

Key Verse: 14:28

1. You will all fall away (27-28)

Jesus knew his disciples' weakness. He knew that though they loved him, they were under the power of death; so they were full of fear. In the moment of crisis they would all run away. But Jesus did not despair. He saw even their running away from the point of view of God's history--as a fulfillment of Scripture. Most importantly, he planted in them hope in his resurrection, gave them a clear direction to repent, and assured them that he would welcome them when they came back.

2. Peter's self-confidence (29-31)

Peter loved Jesus. He was unconditionally committed to him. He said that he would be faithful to Jesus even if they all ran away. But his bold words rested on confidence in himself, not on confidence in God. He did not know himself nearly as well as Jesus knew him. By predicting Peter's denial, Jesus opened a way for Peter to be restored after his failure.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to depend on you and not on myself, and give me the humility to repent and come back to you when I fail.

One Word: Jesus restores those who fail and repent

GETHSEMANE PRAYER

Mark 14:32-42

Key Verse: 14:36

1. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow (32-34)

Jesus was distressed and troubled and sorrowful to the point of death. His arrest and crucifixion were imminent. His disciples were not prepared. But the burden which overwhelmed his soul was the burden of the sins of the world. (See Isaiah 53:3-5.) So what did he do? He prayed, and he asked his disciples to keep watch with him.

2. Not what I will, but what you will (35-36)

Jesus prayed that this cup of suffering and death, and the burden he carried for the sins of the world might pass from him. But even as he prayed, he accepted the will and sovereign purpose of God, and God's peace came into his heart.

3. Are you still sleeping? (37-42)

How hard it is to pray about the things that really trouble us! So Jesus' disciples slept. They knew what Jesus was saying; they just didn't want to think about it. They didn't want to think, so they slept.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray until I can know and accept your will.

One Word: Pray and accept God's will

JESUS' ARREST

Mark 14:43-52

Key Verse: 14:49b

1. Judas, one of the Twelve (43-45)

Judas was a disciple who was trained with the rest, but he betrayed Jesus for money. He seemed to have no compunction of conscience--until the deed was over. Perhaps he was motivated by disappointment that Jesus showed no interest in political power. But most likely he was captured by greed.

2. The Scriptures must be fulfilled (46-49)

When the men seized Jesus, Peter drew his sword and cut off a man's ear. Jesus restrained his disciples. He rebuked his captors for their cowardice. Then he taught them that God is in control of the events of history, even though it seems that evil men are in control. At this point, the disciples all fled.

3. The young man who fled (50-52)

Some say that this young man who fled was the boy Mark. Perhaps this is true because the author is the only one who would remember this detail.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to follow the Scriptures carefully in times of stress. Help me not to betray Jesus.

One Word: The Scriptures must be fulfilled

BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN

Mark 14:53-65

Key Verse: 14:62

1. Peter followed at a distance (53-54)

Peter followed, but with no clear decision of faith and no spiritual preparation. He still looked for small physical comforts.

2. Testimonies against Jesus (55-59)

The testimonies against Jesus consisted of lies and distorted statements. Jesus had once predicted that if they destroyed the temple of his body he would raise it again in three days (Jn 2:19-21).

3. Jesus' faith (60-65)

Jesus did not answer the false charges made against him. He was like a lamb, silent before its shearers (Isa 53:7). When the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of God?" Jesus said, "I am." Then he spoke about his triumphant Second Coming. By faith, he claimed the final victory. His enemies could not defeat him--they could only curse and beat him.

Prayer: Lord, give me the faith and vision of Jesus, so that I may not be discouraged by small defeats and rejections.

One Word: Jesus will come again in triumph

PETER DISOWNS JESUS

Mark 14:66-72

Key Verse: 14:72

1. Peter loses his identity (66-71)

Jesus confessed his faith boldly before those who had power to kill him; Peter, however, denied Jesus-- and he denied himself. He wanted to be faithful, so he had followed while others ran away. But he followed at a distance. And he followed with no decision in his heart. He mingled with the soldiers and warmed his cold hands at their fire. When he was recognized and challenged, his instincts for survival took over. He gave in to fear and disowned Jesus three times.

2. Peter remembers Jesus' words (72)

When the rooster crowed, Peter remembered Jesus' words (14:30). Jesus had planted his word of truth in Peter's heart. When he remembered, his fear and doubt and confusion left him, and tears of repentance began to flow.

Prayer: Lord, you know me better than I know myself. Plant your word of truth in my heart, and help me to remember it when I need to repent.

One Word: Follow Jesus with a committed heart

THE KING OF THE JEWS

Mark 15:1-20

Key Verse: 15:2

1. Are you the King of the Jews? (1-15)

The Sanhedrin decided that Jesus must die. They had no authority to execute him, so they handed him over to Pilate (Jn 18:31). When Pilate questioned him, Jesus affirmed his kingship. He is the true King; his kingdom is spiritual, based on truth (Jn 18:37,38). Jesus was silent before his accusers (5; Isa 53:7). Pilate knew that the Jews accused him because of envy (10). When he tried to compromise and free Jesus, he was thwarted. Finally, he released a murderer and condemned an innocent man to death. Pilate had no commitment to truth or justice.

2. Jesus mocked by soldiers (16-20)

The soldiers dressed him in kingly robes, struck him, and paid him mock homage. There are those today who respect no one and who mock truth and sincerity. They make God's heart sorrowful. Jesus' suffering fulfills Isaiah 53:4,5. He bore my sins. By his stripes I am healed.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, you are King. Purge from my heart fear and compromise.

One Word: Jesus is the true king

HE SAVED OTHERS, NOT HIMSELF

Mark 15:21-32

Key Verse: 15:31b

1. Those who participated (21-27)

Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus' heavy cross. Perhaps this was the turning point of his and his sons' lives. Jesus refused the pain-relieving drug. He would not take the easy way. The soldiers who were assigned to the execution detail were hardened men, unmoved by human suffering. They were only interested in what they could get. But Jesus died for them, too. He was crucified between two robbers (Isa 53:12). The charge written above his head was ironically true--"The King of the Jews." He is indeed the eternal King.

2. He saved others; he couldn't save himself (28-32)

The passers-by mocked him. The chief priests mocked him. They did not know that they spoke words of eternal, unchanging truth. The temple of his body they destroyed, but God raised him up in three days. He saved others, but he did not save himself. He did not save himself because he died to save me.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for saving me. How can I repay the debt I owe?

One Word: Jesus loves me, this I know

THE DEATH OF JESUS

Mark 15:33-41

Key Verse: 15:39b

1. Jesus' cry (33-37)

On the day Jesus died there was darkness at noon. All creation suffered with the suffering Creator God. Jesus' greatest agony was the weight of the world's sins that separated him from his Father God. In that awful moment when it seemed that God had forsaken him, he experienced the depths of utter loneliness. But even in that moment he sought God through his word, and he prayed (Ps 22:1,11,17-19,27).

2. The torn curtain (38)

The curtain in the temple separated sinful men from the Holy God. Jesus' atoning death opened the way for every person to go to God for himself, through Jesus.

3. The centurion's confession (39-41)

The Gentile centurion confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. He represented the Gentile world that would come to Jesus. The women watched, broken-heartedly.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the blood of Jesus which opens the way for this sinner and for the whole world to come to you.

One Word: Just as I am, I come

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

Mark 15:42-47

Key Verse: 15:43

1. Joseph of Arimathea (42-43a)

Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent member of the Sanhedrin. He was a wealthy man, but he was not satisfied with the things of the world. He put his hope in the kingdom of God. He believed in Jesus, but had never had the courage to take a stand for Jesus before his peers.

2. Joseph's decision (43b-45)

Evening came, and Jesus was still hanging on the cross; Joseph made a bold decision. He asked Pilate for Jesus' body. This was a declaration of his commitment to Jesus. He was no longer a hidden believer.

3. Jesus' burial (46-47)

Usually, more time was required for a crucified man to die, so Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was dead. He checked it out carefully, then gave Joseph permission to take the body. The fact of Jesus' death was established.

Prayer: Lord, help me to have clear identity as a Christian.

One Word: A secret believer goes public

THE WOMEN WHO HEARD THE GOOD NEWS FIRST

Mark 16:1-11

Key Verse: 16:6

1. He has risen (1-8)

The women who loved Jesus and who had served him during his lifetime came at sunrise to render one last act of love and service. Their hearts were heavy with sorrow, so their minds clung

to small problems. They worried about who would roll the stone away. When they arrived, the stone was already rolled away and the good news of the gospel was waiting for them. The good news, "He has risen," was announced with a command: "Go, tell his disciples and Peter..." But the women were too terrified to do anything.

2. Mary Magdalene (9-11)

When the others fled, Mary lingered, weeping. She could not forget God's grace, for Jesus had set her free from the power of seven demons. She waited, weeping, and met Jesus; then she joyfully went and told the others that Jesus was alive.

Prayer: Lord, help me to remember your great grace, meet you afresh this morning, and tell the gospel news to someone else.

One Word: Jesus rose to turn our sorrow into joy

JESUS' GREAT COMMAND

Mark 16:12-20

Key Verse: 16:15,16

1. Jesus rebuked them (12-14)

The disciples had the testimony of reliable witnesses who had seen the risen Jesus, but they stubbornly refused to believe. They didn't believe Mary, because sorrow had blinded their spiritual eyes. They refused to believe the two who had met him on the road. So Jesus visited them one night and rebuked them for their lack of faith. He wanted their faith to rest on the word of testimony--not on a mystical experience. Each one must make a decision to believe.

2. Jesus' command (15-20)

Jesus gave his fearful and unbelieving disciples a great mission. He commanded them to preach the gospel to all creation. The gospel is absolute. It must not be compromised. Those who believe will be saved; those who don't will be lost. Baptism here is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit changes us into God's children. God protects his children. Jesus himself is present to confirm his word in the lives of those who hear.

Prayer: Lord, forgive my stubborn unbelief and help me share in preaching your gospel to all creation.

One Word: Believe the word; preach the gospel