**Who Then Is This?**

The Majesty and The Mission of

Jesus Christ, the Son of God

# A Study of the Gospel according to Mark for the University of Northern Colorado Navigators. Created by Aaron Trent.



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# INTRODUCTION

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

 Mark, in writing his gospel account of Jesus, is honest from the beginning. He is no dispassionate observer relating to you a tale of events about which he could care less. From the first line of his narrative, he clarifies his message: here is Good News of the God-Man, Jesus, the Savior and King of all creation. As a unit, the rest of Mark’s gospel account must be studied and discussed through this lens.

The story you are about to study—truest and greatest of all realities—has teeth. This story shockingly tells of a King who bore a cross and that the Lord of all lay dead in a tomb. But there is more, because death itself, greatest of all enemies, could not hold the God-Man, but coughed him up three days later, now forever to rule and reign over all creation. One of the elements of the story most fantastic of all is this: you and I are written in, given a role and the role that you and I will play will be shaped by two questions we each must answer:

*Who is Jesus?*

and

*What does he ask of me?*

Mark writes to help you answer these questions:

The ultimate purpose of Mark is to present and defend Jesus’ universal call to discipleship… Discipleship for Mark is essentially a relationship with Jesus, not merely following a certain code of conduct. Fellowship with Jesus marks the heart of the disciple’s life, and this fellowship includes trusting him, confessing him, taking note of his conduct, following his teaching, and being shaped by a relationship to him. (*ESV Study Notes, Introduction to Mark*)

Do you know him? Is your life marked by increasing trust in, obedience unto, and transformation by Jesus? Notice I did not say perfected, but is there growth, is there pursuit that you may know the incomparable Christ, the King who came and gave his life as a ransom that you might be bought back into a right relationship with the God who created you, into the fullness of all that you yourself were created to be—living in ever-rejoicing wonder and worship in the presence of Jesus?

Ravi Zacharais, Christian apologist, reflecting on the words of Malcom Muggeridge, a famous 20th century journalist, writing about the transient nature of even the greatest icons of history, says this:

Behind the debris of these solemn supermen, and self-styled imperial diplomatists, there stands the gigantic figure of one, because of whom, by whom, in whom and through whom alone, mankind may still have peace: The person of Jesus Christ. I present him as the way, the truth, and the life.

In Mark’s gospel account, you will come face to face with the majesty and the mission of Jesus. Along the way with his disciples, you may find yourself asking a familiar question, “Who then is this?” I pray you will find your answer in the boat on a placid sea, near a woman healed after years of suffering, offering shouts of praise with palms, at the foot of the cross, looking into the empty tomb:

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

# HOW TO DO THIS STUDY

This study of the Gospel according to Mark is an inductive Bible study. This means there won’t be many specific questions to answer or blanks to fill in. Instead, you will be investigating the majesty and the mission of Jesus Christ by working through Mark.

Our goal is that by giving you the right tools you’ll be able to discover the meaning of each passage and the overarching message of Mark on your own equipped with God’s Word in community with others. This method will also provide you with skills that will enable you to study the Bible deeply for years to come!

While there are many elements of the inductive process, we will be using four key components to help you approach a passage, find its meaning, and apply it to your life.

**REFLECT**: *What is the context? How do I build a basic understanding of the narrative?*

**OBSERVE**: *What does the passage say? What narrative elements are used by Mark?*

**INTERPRET**: *What does the passage mean? How does Mark present Jesus as Messiah?*

**APPLY**: *How will the truths of this passage work themselves out in my everyday life?*

Review these elements before starting and refer back to them throughout the semester.

# REFLECT

Stories do not often make much sense if you pick them up in the middle of the book—there are reasons why chapter one is before chapter two and it’s not only numerical. Before you begin to work through the passage for study each week, take a few minutes to think back on the development of Mark’s narrative up to the point you are preparing to read. This quick refresher will have you ready to fit the events, teachings, surprises, and everything in between into the overall story Mark is writing. Once you have caught yourself back up to the Mark’s development of the storyline, you are ready to read the passage for the week.

Speaking of reading. Have you ever had the experience of reading something and then completely forgetting the content of your reading only minutes later? There is a way in which we can read words on a page and, yet, not truly engage in the content of the reading at all. How do we do that? Start with these two steps:

1. Read through the entire passage. Note the overall flow of thought. What seem to be the main ideas? How is the passage structured?

1. Re-read the passage. Stop to make notes of key words, phrases, sentences, and ideas. Utilize different colors to identify recurring themes, key words, or connections that you see within the passage. Your literary dissection will set you up well as you move to observations.

# OBSERVE

Making good observations is a critical part of studying the word of God. During the course of your entire study, but especially in making observations, stay tethered to the text! Similar to the game of tetherball, studying the Bible requires a strong grounding in the actual text and the pursuit of the author’s actual intent. Thus, observations are different than interpretations.

Observations answer the question: *“What does it say?”*

Interpretations answer the question: *“What does it mean?”*

As you study Mark, you must remember that you are reading a narrative complete with introduction, climax, and conclusion. Perhaps the most important observations you will make while studying Mark are connected to the key elements of any narrative including:

* Themes – *What is the central meaning of the story? What is it about?*
* Characters – *How are the characters described and developed? How does each contribute?*
* Plot/Structure – *What events and teachings contribute to the storyline?*
* Setting – *What is the context of the story?*
* Point of View – *Who is telling the story? How does this impact the story?*

In making observations, you will also want to look for:

* Key Words \* Advice/Warnings \* Reasons/Results
* Contrasts \* Repetition \* Questions
* Grammar \* Type of Literature \* Tone

Basic questions can often help to dig up specific observations. Utilize basic question formats such as Who? What? Where? When? and How?

In most cases, each word generates its meaning as it is located in a specific sentence, every sentence builds its meaning from the sentences immediately surrounding it, and so on. To make observations of literary context, you might ask questions such as:

* What is the author saying here? \* What is the author saying next?
* What is the connection? \* How does it fit within the greater context?

Think of observations as breaking the passage into individual pieces of a puzzle—when you are done, you should have all the pieces of the passage laid out before you, ready to reassemble.

\*The observations you make from the focus passage you are given will probably dig up some different questions for further study and discussion. Do not discount the questions as you move along and continue to make note of your questions as you go. Practice curiosity!

# INTERPRET

The Bible is its own best interpreter. Throughout this study, it is a wise and noble thing to search through the Bible to help you understand (Acts 17:11) elements that may seem unclear or confusing or to help you gain greater clarity on a key idea. As you study Mark, you have three other portraits of Jesus that will help you: Matthew, Luke, and John.

There is a non-negotiable in place regarding interpretation: God’s Word has actual meaning. It cannot simply mean what we want it to mean any more than a stop sign or instructions to prescription medicine can mean what we want them to mean based on our own preferential choosing. There are serious consequences to misinterpreting all three!

When interpreting a story, you must take narrative elements into consideration and their respective contributions to the storyline. Does Mark provide any editorial comments? Are there any teachings? Do any characters develop? If so, how and why? What is the main point or theme? Ultimately, what does the passage reveal about who Jesus is, and what he came into the world to do?

Summarizing the meaning of the passage you study, while not always a simple thing to do, helps you focus your understanding of the passage and prepares you to discuss the passage with others in the context of a growing community pursuing Jesus.

# RESPOND

Studying Mark and encountering the person of Jesus demands a personal response. From the first verse to the last, Mark writes his gospel account to answer two foundational questions: *Who is Jesus?* and *What does he ask of me?*

This section provides you with two pairs of questions to help you identify how God is calling you to respond. The first pairing focuses on your understanding of the person of Jesus and how the studied passage is further refining that understanding. The second pairing flows from the first—if Jesus is Savior, Lord, and King, then you and I must know what is required of us in following him. This pairing helps you and I to specifically determine the non-negotiable next steps of being a disciple of Jesus.

These two pairing lead you to the final question, *“How will you respond?”*

One suggested way to clarify your response and to ground it in the foundational realities of Jesus is to write an IF/THEN statement. This helps you to specifically identify a next-step response (an imperative) while guarding against a works-based relationship by rooting your response in the person and work of Jesus (an indicative).

For example, from Mark 4:35-41: IF Jesus commands governs all circumstances in all settings—even the wind and the waves, THEN I will trust him with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that I am facing in my life this week by crying out to him for help and worshiping his sovereign care.

**Mark 1:1-45 // Study #1**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? What narrative elements are used by Mark?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
* Utilize variations of these basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Do you have any questions that have grown from your observations? If so, what are they?

**INTERPRET //**What does the passage mean? How does Mark present Jesus as Messiah?

Do you think there is a main point or theme in this section of the story? What do you think it is?

What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is, and what he came into the world to do?

How would you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

**RESPOND //**How will the truths of this passage work themselves out in my everyday life?

Who is Jesus? How does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding of Jesus?

What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus? What does he ask of you?

How will you respond?

**Mark 2:1-3:6 // Study #2**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? How is Mark writing a story through action and instruction?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
* Utilize variations of these basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

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How will you respond?

**Mark 3:7-4:34 // Study #3**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? How is Mark writing a story through action and instruction?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
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Who is Jesus? How does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding of Jesus?

What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus? What does he ask of you?

How will you respond?

**Mark 4:35-6:6 // Study #4**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? How is Mark writing a story through action and instruction?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
* Utilize variations of these basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Do you have any questions that have grown from your observations? If so, what are they?

**INTERPRET //**What does the passage mean? How does Mark present Jesus as Messiah?

Do you think there is a main point or theme in this section of the story? What do you think it is?

What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is, and what he came into the world to do?

How would you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

**RESPOND //**How will the truths of this passage work themselves out in my everyday life?

Who is Jesus? How does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding of Jesus?

What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus? What does he ask of you?

How will you respond?

**Mark 6:7-56 // Study #5**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? How is Mark writing a story through action and instruction?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
* Utilize variations of these basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Do you have any questions that have grown from your observations? If so, what are they?

**INTERPRET //**What does the passage mean? How does Mark present Jesus as Messiah?

Do you think there is a main point or theme in this section of the story? What do you think it is?

What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is, and what he came into the world to do?

How would you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

**RESPOND //**How will the truths of this passage work themselves out in my everyday life?

Who is Jesus? How does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding of Jesus?

What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus? What does he ask of you?

How will you respond?

**Mark 7:1-8:26 // Study #6**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? How is Mark writing a story through action and instruction?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
* Utilize variations of these basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Do you have any questions that have grown from your observations? If so, what are they?

**INTERPRET //**What does the passage mean? How does Mark present Jesus as Messiah?

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What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is, and what he came into the world to do?

How would you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

**RESPOND //**How will the truths of this passage work themselves out in my everyday life?

Who is Jesus? How does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding of Jesus?

What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus? What does he ask of you?

How will you respond?

**Mark 8:27-9:29 // Study #7**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? How is Mark writing a story through action and instruction?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
* Utilize variations of these basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Do you have any questions that have grown from your observations? If so, what are they?

**INTERPRET //**What does the passage mean? How does Mark present Jesus as Messiah?

Do you think there is a main point or theme in this section of the story? What do you think it is?

What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is, and what he came into the world to do?

How would you sum up the meaning of this passage in your own words?

**RESPOND //**How will the truths of this passage work themselves out in my everyday life?

Who is Jesus? How does this passage challenge or confirm your understanding of Jesus?

What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus? What does he ask of you?

How will you respond?

**Mark 9:30-10:52 // Study #8**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? How is Mark writing a story through action and instruction?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
* Utilize variations of these basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Do you have any questions that have grown from your observations? If so, what are they?

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What does this passage teach you about being a disciple of Jesus? What does he ask of you?

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**Mark 11:1-14:11 // Study #9**

**REFLECT //** What is the context? Build a basic historical and literary understanding of the passage.

Summarize the storyline to this point. Note any major events, characters, or themes. Are there any unresolved questions, tensions, or developments? If so, what are they?

**OBSERVE //**What does the passage say? How is Mark writing a story through action and instruction?

* Remember narrative elements: Themes, Characters, Plot/Structure, Setting, Point of View
* Look for Key Words, Contrasts, Repetition, Tone, Advice/Warnings, Reasons/Results, Questions
* Utilize variations of these basic questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Do you have any questions that have grown from your observations? If so, what are they?

**INTERPRET //**What does the passage mean? How does Mark present Jesus as Messiah?

Do you think there is a main point or theme in this section of the story? What do you think it is?

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**Mark 14:12-15:47 // Study #10**

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**Mark 16:1-8 // Study #11**

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