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EXPLORE THE BIBLE®

Adults • Daily Discipleship Guide • Fall 2023 • CSB

SECOND CHANCES

If you're a golfer, you're familiar with a "mulligan." If not, that's when you get a second chance after a lousy shot. The general rule for recreational golfers is one mulligan per round, but my playing partners and I prefer using them on an "as needed" basis. It's more fun that way.

Truth is, life is always more fun with second chances—or third or fourth or fifth. (You get the idea.) As humans, we have an incredible capacity for failure. As a result, we need a steady stream of mulligans to make things right again. All of us need more than our fair share of "do-overs."

Mark understood the power of a second chance. He was an early follower of Jesus, but he pretty much lived in shadows early on. Even when he got his "big break," joining Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journey, he got homesick and left the team. After that, it was a long time before Paul—and maybe others—trusted Mark again.

Despite Mark's failures, though, God wasn't done with him. Barnabas gave him another chance to be a missionary. Later, Peter became a close friend and mentor. Eventually, even Paul recognized that he was still useful. So, Mark got a mulligan—and he made the most of it by writing a history of Jesus's life and ministry that remains with us today.

God is all about second chances. He loves nothing more than to help us move past our failures and live out our potential in Him. That's really why God sent Jesus in the first place. He understands that we are broken and damaged people. And He knows that we cannot fix ourselves.

Each of us, no matter how good we might think we are, needs a mulligan. God provided it through Jesus. In fact, He's our only hope for this life and the next. If you're ready to accept the salvation that only He can provide, here's what you need to do . . .

-
- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
 - **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
 - **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

MEET THE WRITERS



Brett Selby serves Oklahoma Baptists as a Regional Ministry Partner (Southwest Region).

Greg Pouncey is senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Clinton, Mississippi.

Emily Dean serves as Barbara O' Chester Chair of Women's Ministry at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Randy Fields is the lead pastor at New Covenant Baptist Church in Grass Valley, California.

Ryan Sanders serves as lay pastor at McLean Bible Church in Washington, D.C.

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Mike Livingstone
Content Editor

Amber Vaden
Team Leader

Dwayne McCrary
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

Ken Braddy
Director of Sunday School

Brian Daniel
Director, Adult Ministry

Send questions/comments to
team leader by email:
Mike.Livingstone@Lifeway.com
or by mail to:

Explore The Bible: Daily Discipleship Guide
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Brentwood, TN 37027-7707

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FROM THE TEAM LEADER

I've heard it said, "If you really want to get to know someone, drive across the state of Texas together in the summer without air conditioning. You'll see what they're really like." It's true. We get a front-row seat to a person's character and priorities when we spend time together, especially when challenges arise creating a less-than-comfortable experience. Difficulties reveal our communication skills and our ability to persevere through trials, among other qualities. Experiences like this can forge a strong, tested relationship, taking us beyond a superficial friendship.

The Gospel of Mark is a fast-paced account of Jesus's earthly ministry detailing numerous events and experiences He encountered. Mark gives us a vivid depiction of who Jesus is, what He is like, and what He came to do. We get to know Jesus in the pages of Mark's narrative. In the very first verse, Mark identified Jesus as the Son of God. Jesus's divine nature is a major emphasis for Mark (1:1; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 14:61-62). We also see Jesus's humanity in this Gospel (4:38; 5:30; 8:12; 13:32). Jesus experienced hunger, tiredness, and a whole range of emotions, just like we do. Jesus's death, resurrection, and ascension conclude this Gospel account, irrefutable evidence of Jesus's identity.

Jesus is both fully divine and fully man. He is God's Son and the long-awaited Messiah. Mark's narrative affords us an up-close view of this truth—and it is such good news. It is the foundation of our relationship with Him.

In Him,
Amber Vaden
amber.vaden@lifeway.com

BIBLE READING PLAN

SEPTEMBER

- 1. Mark 1:1-8
- 2. Mark 1:9-13
- 3. Mark 1:14-20
- 4. Mark 1:21-28
- 5. Mark 1:29-38
- 6. Mark 1:39-45
- 7. Mark 2:1-12
- 8. Mark 2:13-17
- 9. Mark 2:18-22
- 10. Mark 2:23-3:6
- 11. Mark 3:7-12
- 12. Mark 3:13-19
- 13. Mark 3:20-30
- 14. Mark 3:31-35
- 15. Mark 4:1-9
- 16. Mark 4:10-20
- 17. Mark 4:21-25
- 18. Mark 4:26-34
- 19. Mark 4:35-41
- 20. Mark 5:1-20
- 21. Mark 5:21-43
- 22. Mark 6:1-6
- 23. Mark 6:7-13
- 24. Mark 6:14-20
- 25. Mark 6:21-29
- 26. Mark 6:30-44
- 27. Mark 6:45-56
- 28. Mark 7:1-23
- 29. Mark 7:24-30
- 30. Mark 7:31-37

OCTOBER

- 1. Mark 8:1-10
- 2. Mark 8:11-21
- 3. Mark 8:22-26
- 4. Mark 8:27-29
- 5. Mark 8:30-33
- 6. Mark 8:34-38
- 7. Mark 9:1-7
- 8. Mark 9:8-13
- 9. Mark 9:14-18
- 10. Mark 9:19-24
- 11. Mark 9:25-29
- 12. Mark 9:30-32
- 13. Mark 9:33-37
- 14. Mark 9:38-41
- 15. Mark 9:42-50
- 16. Mark 10:1-12
- 17. Mark 10:13-16
- 18. Mark 10:17-22
- 19. Mark 10:23-27
- 20. Mark 10:28-31
- 21. Mark 10:32-34
- 22. Mark 10:35-40
- 23. Mark 10:41-45
- 24. Mark 10:46-52
- 25. Mark 11:1-11
- 26. Mark 11:12-14
- 27. Mark 11:15-19
- 28. Mark 11:20-26
- 29. Mark 11:27-33
- 30. Mark 12:1-12
- 31. Mark 12:13-17

NOVEMBER

- 1. Mark 12:18-27
- 2. Mark 12:28-34
- 3. Mark 12:35-37
- 4. Mark 12:38-40
- 5. Mark 12:41-44
- 6. Mark 13:1-2
- 7. Mark 13:3-8
- 8. Mark 13:9-13
- 9. Mark 13:14-23
- 10. Mark 13:24-31
- 11. Mark 13:32-37
- 12. Mark 14:1-11
- 13. Mark 14:12-16
- 14. Mark 14:17-21
- 15. Mark 14:22-26
- 16. Mark 14:27-31
- 17. Mark 14:32-36
- 18. Mark 14:37-42
- 19. Mark 14:43-52
- 20. Mark 14:53-59
- 21. Mark 14:60-65
- 22. Mark 14:66-72
- 23. Mark 15:1-5
- 24. Mark 15:6-15
- 25. Mark 15:16-20
- 26. Mark 15:21-32
- 27. Mark 15:33-41
- 28. Mark 15:42-47
- 29. Mark 16:1-8
- 30. Mark 16:9-20

MEMORY VERSES

SESSION 1:

And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.” - Mark 1:11

SESSION 2:

“Follow me,” Jesus told them, “and I will make you fish for people.” - Mark 1:17

SESSION 3:

If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. - Mark 3:24

SESSION 4:

Everyone ate and was satisfied.
- Mark 6:42

SESSION 5:

They were extremely astonished and said, “He has done everything well. He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”
- Mark 7:37

SESSION 6:

Calling the crowd along with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” - Mark 8:34

SESSION 7:

Immediately the father of the boy cried out, “I do believe; help my unbelief!”
- Mark 9:24

SESSION 8:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” - Mark 10:45

SESSION 9:

He was teaching them: “Is it not written, My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations? But you have made it a den of thieves!” - Mark 11:17

SESSION 10:

“And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Be alert!” - Mark 13:37

SESSION 11:

And he said, “Abba’, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.” - Mark 14:36

SESSION 12:

When the centurion, who was standing opposite him, saw the way he breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son of God!” - Mark 15:39

SESSION 13:

“Don’t be alarmed,” he told them. “You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they put him.” - Mark 16:6

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Most Bible scholars view Mark as the first of the four Gospels and believe both Matthew and Luke drew from Mark's Gospel for their writings.

The Gospel of Mark is anonymous, though early Christian tradition and many Bible scholars today assert that it was written by John Mark.

John Mark was the son of a widow named Mary, in whose house the church sometimes met (Acts 12:12-17), and the cousin of Barnabas (Col. 4:10).

Though we do not see Mark's name in his Gospel, many think his presence appears in the incident in which a young man, following Jesus after His arrest, was captured by Roman soldiers. As the soldiers grabbed his garment, the young man slipped from it and ran away naked (Mark 14:51-52).

Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:5) but turned back during the journey (13:13). This caused Paul and Barnabas to part company (15:36-41). Later, Mark accompanied Barnabas on a separate journey (15:39) and helped Paul during his closing days of Roman imprisonment. Paul said of Mark, "he is useful to me in the ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11).

Many Bible scholars believe the content of Mark's Gospel is based on the recollections of the apostle Peter. Peter referred to Mark "my son" in 1 Peter 5:13.

Mark likely wrote his Gospel from Rome around the time of Peter's martyrdom. The Gospel's attention to Peter's failures and the ongoing Christian persecution under Emperor Nero during that period support that general time frame. Also, the reference to Mark in 1 Peter 5:13 puts him at Rome with Peter.

Internal evidence suggests Mark wrote for Gentile believers in Rome. His explanation of Jewish customs suggests that he wrote for Gentiles who were unfamiliar with Jewish practices (Mark 7:3-4). Mark sometimes used Latin equivalents to explain Greek expressions (12:42; 15:16). He translated Aramaic expressions so his Roman readers could understand them (3:17; 5:41; 15:34). He also quoted rarely from the Old Testament, which would have been more compelling for a Jewish audience than for Gentiles.

Mark likely wrote this Gospel to encourage believers facing the Roman persecution instigated by Emperor Nero.

USING THE DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

A person's spiritual growth hinges on daily Bible engagement. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Our spiritual training should be no different since we need spiritual nourishment every day. The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, as long as God's Word is the final word on the matter. Engagement carries the idea of participation and involvement. *Engagement* is active, requiring us to read, study, and reflect.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you engage with God's Word. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

- Use this resource when studying with a group. The first four pages of each session help the group examine a Bible passage and move us toward acting on the truths discovered as a group and an individual.
- Use the **Talk It Out** page to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study while working to memorize a Bible verse.
- Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.
- Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook at goExploreTheBible.com or at Lifeway.com/digitalstudies.

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Getting the most from Talk It Out

Talk It Out supports groups of three or four people who come together weekly to encourage, share, and sharpen each other. While other issues may be addressed, the Talk It Out section focuses on the weekly memory verse. The questions and comments provide a means for encouraging each other to memorize Scripture while reflecting on the main point of that week's lesson.

These groups are made up of three to four people...

- Participants should be of the same gender.
- These groups should be smaller on purpose.
- These groups can meet at almost any location.
- These groups can easily accommodate each other's schedules.

Some married couples may choose to use the Talk It Out section for a weekly family devotional activity.

...Who meet weekly...

- We were created to relate, so meeting weekly is important.
 - In some cases, your smaller group may need to meet virtually. You may find it best to meet face-to-face every other week or once a month and use virtual tools the other weeks.
-

...To hold each other accountable and encourage each other in their spiritual growth.

- Review the questions and comments in Talk It Out.
- Look for ways the memory verse relates to the main point of the lesson.
- Include time to pray for each other.

SESSION 1

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Introduced!

JESUS IS THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD.

MARK 1:1-13

WHAT INTRODUCTIONS DO YOU REMEMBER MOST CLEARLY?
HOW DID THE INTRODUCTION IMPACT THE NATURE
OF THAT RELATIONSHIP?

All your relationships have something in common. In one way or another, you were introduced to that person by someone, either another person or yourself. With family members who are older than you, it may be difficult to recall the exact moment of the introduction. Nevertheless, every relationship has some type of an introduction because each has a beginning point. Being introduced to someone has the capacity to change your life forever.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Mark's Gospel was the first gospel to be written. Scholars generally affirm this Mark to be synonymous with John Mark who is mentioned on multiple occasions in the New Testament (Acts 12:12; 13:5,13; 15:37-39; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philem. 24; 1 Pet. 5:13). Although he initially failed in his missionary service, he was eventually restored to a place of helpful and fruitful ministry.

Mark reflects themes relevant to the time in which it was written. Persecution of followers of Christ at the hands of the Roman empire was emerging. Believers would have felt threatened, and Mark wrote to address the situation.

The subject of the wilderness was one way Mark sought to encourage believers undergoing hardship. Frequently in the Old Testament, the wilderness was where people encountered God. People came to John the Baptist there to hear the challenge of the word of God and a call to repent (Mark 1:4-5).

Mark likely intended this wilderness reference to be a reminder of Israel being confronted with the challenge of

wholeheartedly trusting God after the exodus. In the wilderness, no natural resources exist for human sustenance. Only the supernatural provision of God can deliver and sustain. Christians were helpless to defend themselves before the power of Roman persecution, and Mark's reference to the wilderness and the provision of God would have spoken to their experience.

Perhaps Mark's most important recurring theme is the identity of Jesus as the Son of God (1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 13:32). This description serves as "bookends" to this Gospel (1:1; 15:39). Knowing that Jesus is God's Son provides a sure foundation for life, even when it becomes challenging.

Mark 1:1-13

1 The **beginning**^A of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the **Son of God**. **B** **2** As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. **3** A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: **Prepare the way**^C for the Lord; make his paths straight! **4** John came baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **5** **The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem**^D were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. **6** John wore a camel-hair garment with a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. **7** He proclaimed, “One who is more powerful than I am is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. **8** I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” **9** In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. **10** As soon as he came up out of the water, he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.” **12** **Immediately**^E the Spirit **drove**^F him into the wilderness. **13** He was in the wilderness **forty days**,^G being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels were serving him.

Key Words

A. Greek *arché*, which means “origin.” It recalls Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. Something new and exciting has occurred in Christ.

B. Expresses the divine nature of Jesus. Mark wanted to make clear that Jesus was no ordinary servant or just a good man. He was divine and equal to God in every way.

C. This prophetic figure of speech (see Mal. 3:1) relates to a king sending a military officer ahead during a royal journey. This person would level the ground and smooth out any ruts in the road so the monarch’s journey would be easier. For Jesus, this was John the Baptist.

D. According to some estimates, more than 300,000 people came to be baptized by John.

E. The Greek word (*euthys*) can also be translated “at once” (NIV).

F. Mark used the Greek verb *ekballō* seventeen times, often in relation to demonic exorcisms. Also rendered “drove out” (ESV; NIV) or “impelled” (NASB).

G. Recalls Moses’s time on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:18; 34:28), Elijah’s journey to the same mountain (1 Kings 19:8), and Israel’s forty years in the wilderness (Deut. 8:2). Jesus also spent forty days instructing His disciples after His resurrection (Acts 1:3).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Prophecy

(Mark 1:1-3)

Believers can know with confidence that Jesus is the Messiah.

- **In what way was the coming of Jesus a “beginning”?**
- **How did John’s fulfillment of prophecy validate the role of Jesus as Messiah?**

2. Prepared

(Mark 1:4-8)

Believers can point others to Jesus as the Son of God.

- **Why is humility crucial in offering an effective witness to Jesus?**
- **How did John demonstrate humility?**
- **How did John’s message set the stage for the earthly ministry of Jesus?**

3. Baptized

(Mark 1:9-13)

Believers find joy in acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God.

- **How should God’s declaration of Jesus being the Son inform a person’s declaration of faith in Jesus?**
- **In what ways does your belief in Jesus as the Son of God bring joy to your life?**

Apply the Text

Discuss as a group some reasons you have confidence in Jesus and His sufficiency for your life.

- **What are some traditions your group can establish in your small group meetings that would nurture and grow this confidence?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God.
(See Mark 3:11; John 1:1-3.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

Read Exodus 23:20; Isaiah 40:3; and Malachi 3:1. Take some time to read the verses before and after each of these verses to understand the context in which they were written. Jot down some notes to gain a deeper understanding of how Old Testament prophecy is linked to John the Baptist’s preparing the way for Jesus. Read Mark 1:1-13 and consider this question: What do these passages teach us about John the Baptist and him preparing the way for the Lord?

DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Mark 1:1-3

Compare Mark 1:1-3 to Genesis 1:1; Exodus 23:20; Isaiah 40:3; and Malachi 3:1.

Mark's initial reference to "the beginning" echoes Genesis 1:1. The coming of Jesus Christ marked a new, decisive moment in history. While connected to the past, as seen in verses 2-3, the coming of Christ to earth was and remains unparalleled. The statement of this monumental arrival is described as "the gospel." The word "gospel" literally means "good news." Mark is laying the foundation for what his gospel is about—the good news of all that God did through His Son, Jesus Christ to reconcile us back to Himself.

The Old Testament predicted a messenger would prepare the way for the Messiah. Mark affirmed this by referencing Exodus 23:20, Isaiah 40:3, and Malachi 3:1. By quoting from the prophets, Mark was identifying Jesus as the Messiah and John the Baptist as the forerunner who would come to prepare the way for Jesus. Mark obviously had a strong confidence in the authority of the written word of God, as did Jesus Himself. This is God's desire for every believer. We know that Jesus is the Messiah because the Bible tells us so.

In what way was the coming of Jesus a "beginning"?

Day 2: Mark 1:4-5

Identify the meaning of John's baptism.

John's ministry was one of preparation, helping people see how they needed to respond to Jesus. His preaching attracted large numbers, but it was no feel-good message drawing the crowds. Rather, it was a message of repentance, calling on people to confess their sins so that they might receive forgiveness. Their penitent attitude was expressed through baptism. While not the same type of baptism we see in Acts that portrayed the death and resurrection of Jesus, it was a significant spiritual moment. Baptism was a ritual for Gentile proselytes who wanted to become worshipers of Yahweh. For a Jew, it was a public confession that they were no longer close to God and needed to get right with Him.

The wilderness was the place where John performed his work. Think of it as desert. Nothing grows there. No water is available. It is a dangerous place. Perhaps the reason why the work of John took place in such a location was to remind people of the need for complete dependency on God. The Jordan River held spiritual significance. The people of God crossed over it to enter the land of promise. Moving into the water of the Jordan was an act of faith in the days of Joshua. The same was true of those who received the baptism of John. It required faith to believe that the message being preached was true.

What's the first step in getting closer to God? Where in your life is repentance needed?

Day 3: Mark 1:6-8

Notice how John contrasted himself with Jesus.

John's preaching included the promise, "One who is more powerful than I am is coming after me." John was a charismatic figure with a compelling personal presence. Even years later in the book of Acts some still followed his teaching (Acts 19:1-4). The possibility existed that those who came from Judea and Jerusalem would become fixated on him, not the coming Messiah. John took pains to ensure that the spotlight would be directed toward Jesus. Of this One to come, he said: "I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals." Untying the strap of someone's sandals was one of the most menial tasks a slave would perform. John felt that he was not even worthy to be a slave of the Messiah and to perform the most menial task for him.

Like John, believers are tasked with pointing others to Jesus. This requires a humility of spirit and heart that realizes how much greater and more important He is. Being a witness to Jesus requires certain attitudes, such as a focus on crucial issues over peripheral ones, a willingness to defer to others when needed, and a long-term, eternal perspective.

How did you come to accept Jesus as the Messiah? Who can you share that message with?

Why is humility crucial in offering an effective witness to Jesus?

Day 4: Mark 1:9-11

Compare Mark 1:11 to Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1.

Mark recorded that Jesus "was baptized in the Jordan by John." Because Jesus "came up out of the water," we can assume He had been immersed in it. In that moment, He "saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove." The reference to the heavens being torn open calls to mind the description of the temple curtain in Jerusalem being torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). In both places, an affirmation of the divine Sonship of Jesus follows.

Then "a voice came from heaven: 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well-pleased.'" These words from heaven are a compilation of two Old Testament references: Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1. The former refers to the Messiah, to God's Son, while the latter points to the Servant of the Lord, a title Jesus took for Himself (Matt. 12:14-21). One denotes glory, while the other denotes suffering. Even from His baptism, Jesus was affirmed as the Son who would suffer on our behalf.

The Father's approving words of the Son seem to echo joy and satisfaction. As earthly parents, we understand the beaming pride we feel over our children when they behave in a stellar, upright fashion. The Father expressed His joy over His Son Jesus at His baptism. Acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God—agreeing with the words spoken from heaven in verse 11—brings satisfaction and joy to our hearts as well.

In what ways does your belief in Jesus as the Son of God bring joy to your life?

Day 5: Mark 1:12-13

Compare Mark 1:12-13 to Matthew 4:1-11.

The experience of Jesus's baptism transitioned into a time of testing. "Immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness," where He was "tempted by Satan." This period of temptation lasted "forty days," a period of time often associated with key events in the Scriptures. Forty is a number that appears multiple times in these wilderness type experiences. It was forty days and nights that Noah endured the rain. The children of Israel wandered in the desert for forty years. Elijah journeyed forty days to Horeb. Here, Jesus was tested in the wilderness for forty days. By not yielding to temptation, Jesus demonstrated His sufficiency as our Savior and as the Son of God.

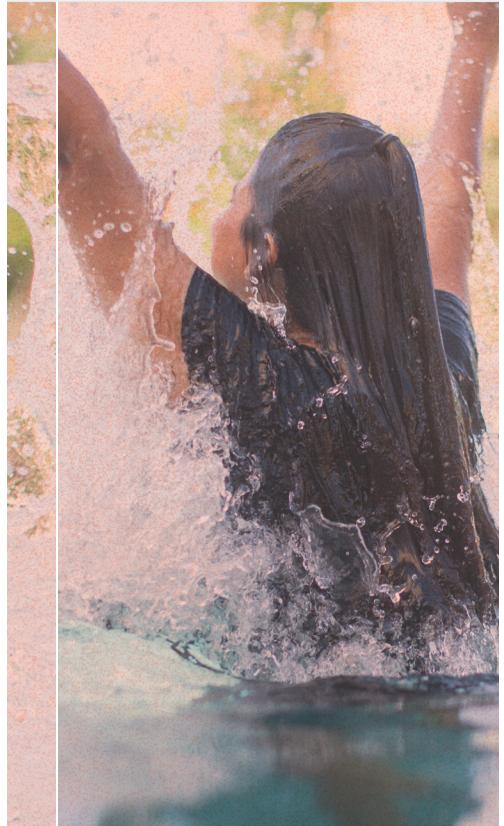
When we go through difficulties, we are susceptible to sinful choices. The times in which we are tempted to sin are the greatest test of our intimacy and relationship with God. Prior to His temptation, and before He performed an act of ministry or power, Jesus heard the affirmation of His Father of His Sonship. Remembering that we belong to God as His adopted sons and daughters strengthens us to remain true to His commandments.

When are you most vulnerable to temptation?

How can Jesus's victory over temptation help you resist temptation?

APPLY THE TEXT

Reflect on the life of John the Baptist and identify characteristics found in his life that would help to point other people to Jesus. How could you begin to incorporate these characteristics in your life? Pick one characteristic and develop at least one action step that you can take this week to begin building it into your life.



LEADER HELPS

Using the Daily Discipleship Guide to Lead a Bible Study Group

The *Daily Discipleship Guide* was created for the purpose of building disciples. As the leader of the group, you play a major role. You can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, facilitating smaller groups, and apprenticing future leaders.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will build disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, challenge the group to act on that passage, and encourage them to reflect more deeply in the week that follows. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Read the Bible passage for the coming session, and review Understand the Context and Key Words.
- If a QR code is available in the Leader Helps, scan it to gain additional information on what's found in the passage.

Through the Week

- Ask God to use the Daily Explorations to help you understand and apply the lesson to your life.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text sections for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.
- Start gathering items you may use in the group time.

The Day before Group Study Time

- Ask God to direct the creation of a group plan.
- Review the group plan in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Review the first four pages of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for that session and the commentary provided in the Leader Helps for that session.
- Review your responses and notes from the completed Daily Explorations.
- Listen to the weekly podcast at goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training.
- Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
Note: You can create custom plans using the DOC file provided in the Digital Download for the Leader Pack—it's the same content printed in the Leader Helps.
- Consult *QuickSource* for additional insights and ideas.
- Review the weekly Adult Extra idea on the Explore the Bible blog (goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).
- Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional insight.
- Pull needed posters from the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (or create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161).
- Make sure you have all your resources gathered including extra copies of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for guests.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early. The group time begins when the first person arrives so make sure that is you.
- Pray for the study and the group.
- Adjust the room as needed.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact the group, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests and other appropriate information.
- Record insights gained about teaching, individuals in the group, and Scripture.
- Pray for specific needs of people in the group.
- Do it all again, asking God to open you mind and heart to His Word this week.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.

- **Visit them.** Deliver a copy of the Daily Discipleship Guide to every person in your group.
- **Ask them.** That seems simple, but the simple is not always easy. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement instead of a question, such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.” It’s a question disguised as a statement, so it’s not as threatening.
- **Tell them.** Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- **Show them.** Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- **Invite them.** Call on pre-enlisted volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they are using the Daily Exploration section.

As teachers, we have taken on the responsibility of encouraging everyone on our ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. We can’t make them do it, but we can provide them with a tool and encourage them to use it.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

Talk It Out is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly. The goal of the smaller groups is simple: holding ourselves and others accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Explain the importance of the smaller groups, emphasizing the goal.
 - Allow the group to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups). This tends to work better than assigning groups.
 - Allow the smaller groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
 - You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
 - Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new people and guests.
 - As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.
-

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
 - Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
 - Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
 - Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
-

Be in a smaller group:

- Meet with two or three other Bible study leaders as part of your weekly preparation.
- Be part of a smaller group within your class.
- Host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

Building Disciples by Apprenticing Other Leaders

Starting new groups is critical to the life of your church and the lives of the individuals in your group. People in your group need to be challenged to take on a greater role in your church. Providing the opportunity to do so helps them grow and removes the largest barrier to starting new Bible study groups—finding a leader. You can make a difference in the growth of individuals and in the future growth of your church by apprenticing potential group leaders. Here’s how you can use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to make this happen.

- **STEP 1:** Prior to group time, ask a potential leader to follow along in the Leader Helps for that session as you lead the group. Tell him or her to note what you did and what you adjusted. You’re just coaching your apprentice to use the book he or she has in a different way.
- **STEP 2:** After that group experience, spend time with the group member going over what you did and how you adjusted the leader material for the group.
- **STEP 3:** Invite him or her to do this again in a few weeks.
- **STEP 4:** Ask him or her to lead a group time or part of one using the suggestions in the Leader Helps for that session. You may be away that week, or you can simply observe as a group member. Offer to help him or her prepare if needed.
- **STEP 5:** As your apprentice gains confidence, allow him or her to teach more in the near future.
- **STEP 6:** As a need for a new group surfaces, prepare to move on to lead the new group, with the apprentice becoming the leader of the current group (which tends to work best), or commission the apprentice and a few others from the group to start a new group.
- **STEP 7:** Do it all again.

Not everyone in the group will become a Bible study leader. For those who do, you can become a mentor to potential leaders, extending your teaching ministry and demonstrating discipleship.

Introduced!

Session 1 • Mark 1:1-13



ENGAGE

PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Conduct an online search to discover customs for meeting new people in various countries. (*Examples: shaking hands, kissing on the cheek, touching noses, and so forth*)

ASK: What is the most unusual way you have been introduced to someone? Invite adults to discuss customs for making introductions. Share information from your research concerning ways in which various cultures introduce one another.

STATE: *Every culture has a way of making introductions because those initial connections mark the beginning point of a relationship.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud the first paragraph on page 13 and discuss how introductions impact the nature of a relationship.

CONTEXTUALIZE: Use **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Background of Mark's Gospel*), **Pack Item 7** (*Handout: Mark Time Line*), and **Pack Item 2** (*Outline of Mark*) to provide an overview of Mark's Gospel. Discuss Mark's identity, the date of his Gospel, its original audience, its purpose, and its major themes. Using *Understand the Context* (p. 13),

emphasize that many scholars believe that Mark's Gospel was the first one written and that his audience primarily consisted of Gentile Christians.

TRANSITION: *Let's look closer at how Mark introduced Jesus to the initial readers of his Gospel.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Mark 1:1-3.

Direct adults to work in pairs to identify key words or phrases. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to report on their conversations. Lead a brief discussion on what they chose and why those words and phrases seemed significant.

OUTLINE: Point out the significance of these words: "beginning" (the starting point of Jesus's work); "gospel" (good news, used by the Romans to describe a great announcement); and "Son of God" (emphasizes Christ's deity).



Son of God

Mark 1:1 declares Jesus to be the Son of God. Learn more about Mark's use of the term "Son of God" in this Gospel.

- **(1:1)** There are three distinct “beginnings” in the Bible. Genesis 1:1 points us to the initiation of all creation. John’s Gospel (1:1) emphasizes the pre-existence and deity of the Word (Jesus). And in Mark 1:1, readers find the beginning of the gospel, the opening act in the life and ministry of God’s Son.
- **(1:1)** The word *gospel* comes from the Greek “good news.” Mark laid the foundation for what his Gospel was about—the good news that Jesus Christ would bring redemption and salvation for all humanity. The term originally meant any good news, but ultimately it came to represent the story of Christ’s ministry and sacrifice as He provided salvation to the world.

EXPLAIN: *Mark did not mince words in establishing the gospel. A great event took place when the Messiah, the Son of God, came to earth.*

ASK: If Mark’s audience was primarily Gentile, why did he refer to an Old Testament prophecy to introduce John the Baptist?

DISCUSS: Point out that while Mark’s original readers weren’t Jewish, seeing Jesus as the promised Messiah could bolster their faith and help them embrace Him as the Savior of the world.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Mark 1:4-8.

SUMMARIZE: Direct the group to briefly restate Mark’s description of John.

ASK: What was the focus of John’s message?

EXPLAIN: *John’s message emphasized the coming Messiah. He never described himself or what he had to offer anyone. John was humble about his ministry. He only mentioned the One who was coming after him. The focus of his ministry was on Jesus, the Messiah.*

- **(1:7)** John consistently placed his emphasis on Jesus, not on himself. While many religious leaders of the day built themselves up in the eyes of the people, John did just the opposite. Tying or untying the laces on sandals would have been a servant’s job. Rabbis taught that a master or teacher could ask their servant or pupil to do just about anything except tying or untying shoes. John indicated that he was not even worthy to perform this humblest act of service for the Messiah.

ASK: How did John’s message set the stage for the earthly ministry of Jesus? (p. 15)

TRANSITION: *Mark did not provide a lot of extra details in his Gospel, so each verse is full of important information. After a brief description of John’s ministry, Mark introduced Jesus’s earthly ministry.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Mark 1:9-13, as the rest of the group listens for details Mark shared about Jesus. *(Possible answers: Came from Nazareth in Galilee, baptized in the Jordan by John, and so forth)*

ASK: What was different about Jesus's baptism than John's other baptisms? Why is that important for us to understand?

EXPLAIN: Draw attention to the fact that Mark said Jesus came up out of the water, which describes a baptism by immersion. Emphasize that baptism is not required for salvation, but it serves as an act of obedience, an outward symbol of inward devotion to Christ. Encourage a few volunteers to share what they remember about their baptisms. Share that you are available to talk with any adult who has questions about being baptized.

DISCUSS: Read verses 10-11 again aloud. Point out that this is a time when all three members of the Trinity were revealed in Scripture. Ask: **What was God the Father's response to Jesus's baptism?** Affirm that the Father took pleasure in the Son's baptism. Note that this was another way Mark validated Jesus's claim as Messiah and Savior.

DESCRIBE: Use information below to explain the nature of Jesus's temptation. Point out that we are often most vulnerable to temptation after a close experience with God. Emphasize that Jesus withstood Satan's temptations perfectly.

- **(1:12-13)** Jesus's period of temptation lasted forty days, a period of time often associated with key events in the Scriptures (see Ex. 24:18; 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8; Acts 1:3). Some see this as representative of Israel's forty years in the wilderness (Deut. 8:2). If this is correct, then we can rejoice in the fact that where

they failed, Jesus succeeded. While the fact of Jesus's triumph is an example for us upon which we can draw, this is but a derived application of it. By not yielding to temptation, Jesus demonstrated His sufficiency as our Savior and as the Son of God.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- *Believers can know with confidence that Jesus is the Messiah.*
- *Believers can point others to Jesus as the Son of God.*
- *Believers find joy in acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God.*

ASK: In what ways does believing in Jesus as the Son of God bring joy to your life?

CHALLENGE: Encourage the group to use the **Daily Exploration** on pages 17-19 to go deeper into God's Word.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to help you keep your focus on Jesus this week.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by reflecting on how knowing Jesus as Messiah brings joy to your life. Contact the group by email or text, encouraging them to express their joy in Jesus this week.