

SESSION 2

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Proclaimed

JESUS IS WORTHY OF US TELLING OTHERS ABOUT HIM.

MARK 1:35-45

WHAT TOPICS OF DISCUSSION MOST INTEREST YOU,
AND HOW DO THOSE TOPICS RELATE TO
WHO YOU ARE AS A PERSON?

While topics of conversation vary among adults, it is always true that people in groups talk about what is interesting to them. Even the quietest person will on occasion speak about things that are important to him or her. Some like to talk about ordinary events while others enjoy discussing controversial issues. One thing is certain: what we say reflects what is on our mind. Subjects or experiences that captivate us will eventually find their way out in our conversation.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

After His baptism, temptation, and the arrest of John, Jesus began His earthly ministry. His message called for repentance and faith, through which hearers could enter the kingdom of God. Yet this was not a task Jesus was content to pursue by Himself. Immediately after He began proclaiming the gospel, He invited four fishermen to leave their vocation and join Him in the pursuit of a divine mission. This mission was characterized by both word and deed. Interspersed with authoritative teaching and preaching, Jesus healed the sick and delivered the demon possessed.

Beginning in Mark 2:1, we read about a series of conflicts in which the religious leaders castigated Jesus. Joining Jesus in His mission of kingdom proclamation inevitably results in conflict. Obstacles must be overcome to witness to the supremacy of Jesus.

The first incident involved the authority of Jesus to both heal on the Sabbath and forgive sin. Following His call of Levi, the tax collector, the religious leaders criticized Jesus for socializing with sinful people. A third conflict was about fasting and the

joyful nature of the ministry of Jesus. The observance of the Sabbath was the focus of the final two conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders. When Jesus's disciples were censured for plucking grain on the Sabbath, He used the occasion to clarify the true purpose of this ancient practice. Its purpose was to serve the needs of people. This higher purpose was affirmed by Jesus when He restored the withered hand of a man in the synagogue on the Sabbath. The hardness of heart displayed by the Pharisees at this healing revealed a preference for ritual over renewal. This both grieved and righteously angered Jesus.

Mark 1:35-45

35 Very early in the morning, **A** while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a **deserted place**; **B** and there he was praying. **36** Simon and his companions **searched** **C** for him, **37** and when they found him they said, “**Everyone is looking for you.**” **D** **38** And he said to them, “Let’s go on to the neighboring villages so that **I may preach** **E** there too. This is why I have come.” **39** He went into all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. **40** Then a man with leprosy came to him and, on his knees, begged him, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” **41** Moved with compassion, **F** Jesus reached out his hand and **touched him.** **G** “I am willing,” he told him. “Be made clean.” **42** Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. **43** Then he sternly warned him and sent him away at once, **44** telling him, “See that you **say nothing to anyone**; **H** but go and show yourself to the priest, and offer what Moses commanded for your cleansing, **as a testimony to them.**” **I** **45** Yet he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news, with the result that Jesus could no longer enter a town openly. But he was out in deserted places, and they came to him from everywhere.

Key Words

A. Jesus did not get much rest after the previous night’s activity, but He still made time with the Father a priority.

B. The Greek word *erēmos* has also been translated “solitary place” (NIV; KJV) or “secluded place” (NASB).

C. The wording often implies pursuing with a hostile intent. While the disciples were not antagonistic toward Jesus, their arrival was an unwelcome intrusion on His time with God.

D. The disciples did not think Jesus was where He should have been.

E. Jesus’s primary mission was to preach. The miracles simply validated His message.

F. “Pity” (ESV). Jesus was emotionally moved by the situation and showed compassion by touching the leper.

G. According to Mosaic law, touching a leper brought spiritual defilement (Lev. 5:2; 13:45-46). Jesus’s compassion superseded ceremonial laws.

H. Jesus did not want to gain the reputation of being just a miracle worker. This would hinder His ability to spread the good news.

I. Jesus instructed the healed man to show himself to the priest so he could be pronounced ceremonially clean (Lev. 14:2-31).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Focused

(Mark 1:35-39)

Believers must share the gospel in places that have not yet heard about Jesus.

- **How did the focus of the disciples differ from the focus of Jesus?**
- **Why might a person get confused about the mission of Jesus?**

2. Compassionate

(Mark 1:40-42)

Believers show compassion by helping others in Jesus's name.

- **What might keep a person from showing compassion to others?**
- **What types of compassionate behavior would reinforce a verbal proclamation about Jesus?**
- **What can we learn from Jesus's actions here? What are some ways we can put those principles into action each day?**

3. Proclaimed

(Mark 1:43-45)

Believers demonstrate thankfulness by telling about the work of Jesus.

- **Why did Jesus warn the man against telling anyone about His healing?**
- **Since people talk about the things that interest and captivate them, why do believers talk so sparingly about Jesus?**

Apply the Text

Discuss the importance the group plays in encouraging one another to give witness to Jesus.

- **What practice could your group build into its weekly schedule that might inspire each member to be a witness for Jesus?**
- **What are some practical ways in which the group can remind itself of the purpose for its existence?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Missions

It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ. (See Matthew 9:37-38; Acts 1:8.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Dig deeper into the background and usage of key words or phrases.

Focusing on the phrase “show yourself to the priest” (Mark 1:44), do a background study of the requirements that would have been necessary for someone who had leprosy to have been declared clean. Start in Leviticus 13-14. Use a concordance to discover other passages where leprosy is mentioned. Consult a Bible dictionary to help you better understand what leprosy was and what a leper would have faced if they had not been cured.

DAILY EXPLORATION

Day 1: Mark 1:35-37

Note the time and place Jesus went to pray.

Spending time in prayer was characteristic of Jesus (see also 6:46; 14:32). The “deserted place” to which He retreated for prayer is translated from the same word used for “wilderness” previously (1:3,4,12,13). As a wilderness, the place of prayer is both the place of utter dependence on God as well as where spiritual testing occurs. While not the same location as earlier, Mark’s word selection communicated something spiritually significant. Participation in prayer is proportionate to the depth of dependence felt by the follower of Jesus. Its presence or absence in our lives is revealing. It is noteworthy to read that Jesus went to His place of prayer “very early in the morning,” expressing its priority in His life. This description should drive us to examine our own commitment to communion with God the Father.

It appears that the disciples were up early that morning as well, but with a different motive than Jesus. They “searched for him” but with a different agenda. The concern expressed to Jesus by His disciples was that “everyone is looking for you.” News about Jesus’s teaching and miracles had spread throughout the whole area (1:28). His followers were caught up in the rising popularity of Jesus. They saw it as a marketing opportunity to be seized, but Jesus did not share their perspective.

How can you make prayer more of a priority in your life?

Day 2: Mark 1:38

Pay attention to the focus of Jesus’s mission.

The prayer life of Jesus demonstrated His resolute focus on the mission given to Him by God. He prayed because He was absolutely clear on the focus of His mission. The disciples wanted to stay where the crowds were growing, but Jesus wanted to expand His preaching ministry to other places where His message hadn’t been yet heard. He told the disciples: “This is why I have come.”

While the crowd was expecting more miracles, Jesus told the disciples it was time to move on. His mission was not necessarily to draw large crowds or to meet their expectations. He had come to preach the good news of God’s kingdom to as many people as possible. It was not about being popular or becoming famous. His ministry and message involved far more than just one or two towns. It was a message for all to hear and that meant it was time to share in places that had yet to hear Him. This is also our purpose and ministry. We are commissioned to take the good news to those who have not yet heard about Jesus, letting them know that salvation is only available through Him.

Why might a person get confused about the mission of Jesus?

How do these verses give you clarity about Jesus’s mission?

Day 3: Mark 1:39-40

Note the desperation in the leper's request.

Jesus was approached by a man with leprosy. The word "leprosy" was used to denote a wide variety of skin diseases. Leviticus 13 lists seven different types of leprosy. Beyond the physical pain and incapacitation that it brought, there was a social stigma attached to the disease. Leprosy was no doubt feared among the general population. The result was that lepers were outcasts in society, isolated and alone in their affliction.

Leprosy was more of a condition than merely a disease. Physically, your body was literally coming apart. Socially, you were considered a pariah. Spiritually, you were thought to be cursed by God. Lepers were prohibited from participating in Old Testament worship. There was a sense in which a leper would have felt abandoned by God. Such a state of mind was echoed in this leper's request: "If you are willing." This leper was desperate enough to fall to his knees and beg Jesus to make him "clean."

Jesus didn't recoil from this man, although onlookers may have done so. Instead, He received him in his desperate and risky action. It is interesting that the leper didn't ask to be healed but instead requested cleansing. Commentators point out that leprosy was and is considered to be a metaphor for sin, which requires absolution and forgiveness.

When is the last time you were desperate for Jesus?

Day 4: Mark 1:41-42

Circle the word "touched."

Perhaps the most striking aspect of these verses is the fact that Jesus "reached out his hand and touched" the leper. This would have shocked anyone witnessing this encounter. Touching a leper was both a social taboo and a religious violation. There's no telling how long it had been since this man had any physical encounter with another person. Touching a leper rendered a person ceremonially unclean. But Jesus did not shrink back from inserting Himself into human need.

Beyond the fact of a wonderful and instant work of power in which the leprosy left him and the man was made clean, something else amazing took place in this miracle. Prior to the arrival of Jesus, whenever something clean encountered something unclean, the clean then became unclean and had to be renewed to its previous condition. The whole sacrificial system assumed this dynamic. What we see here and elsewhere in the life and ministry of Jesus is a radically different situation. Here we see the clean encountering the unclean in such a way that the unclean then becomes clean. This is an accurate summary of the gospel. This also testifies to the greatness of Jesus. His holiness and purity were great enough to withstand and overcome the stain of human sinfulness and uncleanness. His compassion prompted Him to become sin for us, even though He possessed no sin within Himself (2 Cor. 5:21). How wonderfully amazing this is, and how worthy Christ is of our eternal adoration!

What types of compassionate behavior toward others would reinforce your verbal proclamation about Jesus?

Day 5: Mark 1:43-45

Pay attention to what the formerly leprous man did.

We might imagine that Jesus would welcome the publicity that could come from a miraculous healing. However, He “sternly warned him and sent him away at once.” He commanded the restored leper to seek out a priest to offer the sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus 14. Why would Jesus strongly forbid this healed man from telling anyone about it? The answer lies in His focus on the mission of proclamation. Healing was not the primary object of His work. Spiritual redemption was the reason He came. Large crowds drawn by publicity and fueled by possible wrong motives might hinder the accomplishment of His mission.

While not excusable, it is understandable that the man disregarded Jesus’s command when “he went out and began to proclaim it widely and to spread the news.” His motives might have been good, but it resulted in Jesus being unable to “enter a town openly.”

The formerly leprous man once lived in isolation from others. His failure to follow Jesus’s instructions resulted in Jesus having to remain outside cities “in deserted places.” The man was liberated from his social separation, but Jesus was somewhat condemned to it. Some have described the gospel as the Great Exchange, whereby Jesus took our judgment upon Himself and to us His righteousness. This is the essence of our proclamation of Jesus Christ.

What does your willingness to talk openly about Jesus indicate regarding your relationship with Him?

APPLY THE TEXT

List some acts of compassion you could regularly perform for the sake of the gospel. Determine a time in which you will complete them. How can you use the ones you already do as an introduction to sharing a witness for Jesus? What would be the outcome if you do good works but fail to share the gospel?



Proclaimed

Session 2 • Mark 1:35-45



ENGAGE

PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Make a list of topics that people might enjoy discussing. (Examples: sports, hobbies, children/grandchildren's activities, travel, and so forth)

DISCUSS: As adults arrive, encourage them to suggest topics that people like to discuss. Talk about why those topics might be good icebreakers. Allow a volunteer to read the first paragraph on page 21. Ask: **Why do people find it easy to discuss topics that interest them?**

TRANSITION: *In today's session, we'll take a look at some people who were excited about what Jesus had done for them. They were so excited that they couldn't help but share it with their families and friends.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Mark 1:35-39, instructing the group to focus on Jesus's mission.

EXAMINE: Invite the group to briefly skim Mark 1:21-34. Ask: **Why was everyone looking for Jesus?** Encourage adults to think about times when they've wanted to get away for some peace and quiet. Ask: **Where did**

Jesus go and what did He do? How did this fit into His ministry focus? Point out that Jesus's disciples had a different idea about what Jesus should be doing, but He never wavered from His mission. He had come to preach good news.

REFLECT: Emphasize that the crowd was looking for more miracles, but Jesus recognized the importance of shutting out the distractions and focusing on God's mission for His life. Talk about what believers today can learn from Jesus's example and how they can apply it to their lives.

- **(1:35)** Throughout the Gospels, Jesus made time alone with God a priority in His life. In fact, Luke shared that Jesus had a habit of pulling away from the crowds and finding quiet places to pray (Luke 5:15-16). Jesus understood the lure of the crowds and the temptations of popularity. That's why He was so careful about setting aside time to talk with His Father. Likewise, He calls His followers to remove the distractions of life and to spend time with God regularly.

TRANSITION: *Let's continue to look at the response of those who felt the impact of Jesus's mission and ministry.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Mark 1:40-42.

EXAMINE: Group adults into teams of two or three. Direct them to read through verses 40-42 again. Encourage them to create a one-sentence summary of these verses. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their summaries.

EXPLAIN: Point out that leprosy made this man unclean according to the law. Emphasize that he would have been considered an outcast, both because he had a disease and because many Jews believed that disease was the result of sin in his life.

- **(1:40)** The biblical term "leprosy" was used to describe many skin diseases, but it commonly affected every part of the body. In worst cases, it would slowly eat away and rot the body, putting its victim under a guaranteed death sentence. Lepers were isolated from social interactions and placed in leper colonies outside the city. They had to dress like people in mourning by wearing torn clothes and a face covering. They were not allowed to keep their hair clean because they were considered the equivalent of the walking dead. When others approached, they were required to shout out that they were unclean so those people could avoid them.

DISCUSS: On the board, write *Clean* and *Unclean*. Instruct the group to outline characteristics of a person who is clean and one who is unclean. Talk about how prejudice played into the clean/unclean conversation. Encourage adults to think about people who would probably be considered unclean today.

- **(1:41)** Touching a leper was strictly forbidden by the Old Testament law and would have made Jesus ceremonially unclean. However, Jesus was so moved by the man's request that He chose to personally touch the man and bring healing to him. He could have healed him in a variety of ways, but Jesus chose to touch him, showing His love and genuine compassion toward him. In doing so, Jesus demonstrated that He placed love and compassion over rituals and regulations. Mark recorded one of the two times in the New Testament where someone was healed of a skin disease.

CHALLENGE: Highlight the fact that Jesus didn't limit His ministry to certain groups. Note that He entered into people's needs, refusing to shrink back from helping whoever needed Him. Remind adults that believers today have the same responsibility.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Mark 1:43-45, encouraging adults to consider why Jesus wanted the man to keep his healing quiet.

EXPLAIN: Use the bulleted paragraph below to share why Jesus did not want to draw attention to the miracle. *Once again, Jesus wanted to stay focused on His mission. He came to bring spiritual healing to people. He used miracles to make that happen, but He did not want the miracles to draw people's attention away from their greater needs.*

- **(1:44)** By warning the healed man not to tell anyone about being healed, Jesus was emphasizing that His mission was not to just heal people. He didn't want

the reputation of another miracle worker or healer. He didn't want massive crowds coming to him only to be healed from whatever ailment they were suffering from. Jesus was committed to revealing the kingdom of God on earth. So He was remaining true to His mission. By avoiding the distractions that the healing could create, He was focusing on His message of redemption and His work to bring the good news of salvation to everyone.

ASK: How can meeting physical needs open the door for conversations about spiritual needs?

COMPARE: Read Mark 1:43-45 again. Encourage adults to suggest how the man's reaction differed from Jesus's instructions to Him. Ask: **Why do you think the man failed to obey Jesus's instructions?**

REFLECT: *When someone has experienced Jesus's work in their lives, they can't help but talk about it.* Direct the group to think about a time when they were excited to talk about Jesus. Ask: **What sparked that enthusiasm? What has watered down that enthusiasm since then?** Remind adults that Jesus is still at work in their lives. Encourage them to look for chances to share Him with someone who needs to know about Him this week.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week Bible passage:

- *Believers must share the gospel in places that have not yet heard about Jesus.*

- *Believers show compassion by helping others in Jesus's name.*
- *Believers demonstrate thankfulness by telling about the work of Jesus.*

CHALLENGE: Discuss the Apply the Text questions on page 23. Encourage the group to consider how they can imitate Jesus's mission and tell someone about Him this week. Give each adult an index card and instruct them to write their goal for sharing Jesus. Direct them to keep the card with them this week and to let it serve as a reminder to seek opportunities to share Jesus. Remind the group to use the **Daily Exploration** on pages 25-27 to go deeper into God's Word during the week.

PRAY: In closing, invite each person to offer a one sentence prayer of gratitude for Jesus's work in their lives.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by examining your own passion for sharing Jesus. Reflect on when you were most excited about telling others about Jesus. Remember how you felt in those moments. Examine your present excitement about sharing Jesus. Contact the group through email or text, reminding them to focus on their goal of sharing Jesus this week.