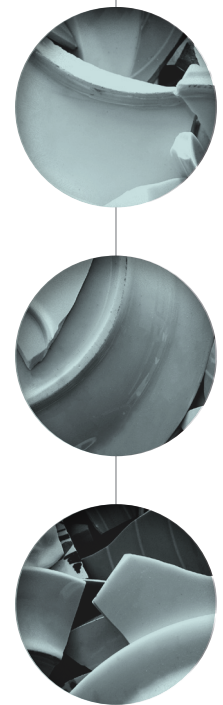


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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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Explore the Bible
QuickSource Leader Guide
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A WORD 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.

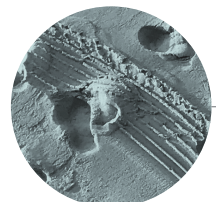
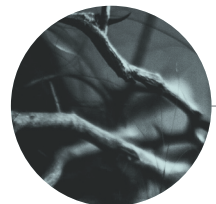
The Gospel of Mark is a fast-paced account of Jesus's earthly ministry detailing numerous events and experiences He encountered. Mark gives us a vivid depiction of who Jesus is, what He is like, and what He came to do. We get to know Jesus in the pages of Mark's narrative. In the very first verse, Mark 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



Everything I Learned about Outreach, I Learned from an HVAC Company

By Dwayne McCrary

In the fall, the HVAC* service companies start reminding us about getting ready for the winter months. If we have a contract with a local service company, most of us get a card reminding us to make an appointment for our semi-annual HVAC check. If they don't hear from us, we get a second card and maybe a text. If we continue to ignore the reminders, we eventually get a call to schedule the semi-annual check. They warned us, so we are almost apologetic when they call for not already scheduling the appointment.

As the day of the appointment approaches, we get a reminder that they'll be coming between certain hours. On the day of the check, we most likely get a text letting us know they are on their way. Once at our home, they knock on the door, tell us why they are here (as if we didn't know), and enter with plastic booties covering their feet. They do their inspections, tell us if we need to take any other actions, give us an opportunity to ask questions, and are on their way. We may even receive a follow up text or email thanking us for the business.

We can learn some things from HVAC companies when it comes to reaching out to others.



1. WE NEED TO REMIND OTHERS WE ARE HERE.

Over the summer, people tend to be on the go more than at other times. We see more individuals taking vacations, participating in outdoor activities, and planning family outings. Our assumptions usually are that they know where we are when they're back home and are ready to settle down for a season. HVAC companies don't assume we know when to call them or that we know they're still in business. Instead, they remind us that we need them, and we should do the same. Keeping up with the people assigned to our Bible study group and our guests is part of being a good shepherd.

2. WE NEED TO GO ONSITE.

The HVAC companies don't expect us to dismantle our systems and take them in for review. Nor do they depend on a video app to walk us through how to check our system. They come to our house. We may think contacting someone in their home is old school, but research indicates the expectation of Sunday School leaders visiting people was introduced in the early 1920s. That time was filled with all kinds of challenges, including the aftermath of the Spanish Flu, with parallels to today (you can find out more about these parallels in the book listed in the article bio). Just like the 1920s, the post-COVID world requires us to go to people far from God if we want to reach them.

3. WE NEED TO MAKE APPOINTMENTS.

We are thankful that HVAC technicians don't randomly show up at our front porches. They make appointments so they can use their time wisely, and so we can remove stuff in front of the return air vent. We both win! The same is true when it comes to contacting someone face-to-face. We want to be good stewards of our time and allow them to make any preparations they may want to make.

The HVAC company usually sends a text to let us know they're about to be there, even though they already have an appointment. Doing so serves as a last-minute reminder to get ready for their arrival. When we are headed to a person's residence (who has been a guest or away for a few weeks), we can send a text to let them know we are on the way, even if we already have an appointment.

4. WE NEED TO REMEMBER WE ARE ON THEIR TURF.

The HVAC tech wears booties because he or she is on our turf. Most technicians wouldn't wear those same booties in their home. When we stop by someone's home, we need to remember that we're on their turf. The way we treat any pets they may have, the questions we ask, and the things that we point out about their home are important. Knowing the difference between asking why they display a picture versus inviting them to tell us the story behind that same photo matters.

5. WE NEED TO DO WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO.

Most of us know what to expect when the HVAC technician visits because they've told us on the cards, as well as when making the appointment. Imagine the surprise most of us would express if the technician began testing each chair in our living room. We would be looking for another HVAC company!

When we make an appointment to see someone face-to-face, we can explain why we're coming by and then be true to that explanation. One reason we may have for making an onsite visit is delivering our Bible study resources. This gives us a natural reason at least four times a year to visit everyone assigned to our Bible study group.

The HVAC tech wants to be thorough, but he or she knows we have other things to do. We need to follow that same practice when making a visit to a group member or guest.

6. WE NEED TO FOLLOW UP AFTERWARDS.

Once the HVAC tech leaves, most of us get a summary of the inspection and some tips that may help our system last longer. This individual may also thank us for trusting their company with the hope that we will continue using their service.

After we visit someone face-to-face, we too can send a personal follow-up message, giving them a tip about the upcoming Bible study, how they might use the resource we dropped off, or information they requested. While this may seem like a small thing, a follow-up message communicates that we care.

Dwayne McCrary is the manager of adult ongoing Bible studies at Lifeway and teaches an ongoing Bible study as well. His most recent book is *Farsighted: Fostering a Culture of Outreach in our Churches and Bible Study Groups* (available at Lifeway.com/TrainingResources).

*HVAC: Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning

HOW TO USE QUICKSOURCE

Using *QuickSource* as your primary resource for preparing to lead a small Bible study group (with the group using the *Personal Study Guide*).

1. Read the core passage, using the Key Words as a quick commentary on the passage.

2. Review the outline provided on the Talking Points page (page two of each session) to organize your thoughts and identify the key points in the passage.

Tip: You can record your notes on the second page if you desire, giving you a way to remember insights gained.

3. Review the questions with response prompts on the Discussion Plan page (page three of each session), recording your response to the questions as you do so.

Some questions and response prompts are included in the *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide*. The page numbers on which the questions appear in the *Personal Study Guide* is noted. The prompts for each question are adapted from the comments in the *Personal Study Guide* on each passage.

Tip: Additional “Bonus” questions are also provided in the Discussion Plan, along with the For Further Discussion QR codes. These extra questions are found only in *QuickSource*.

4. Consider ways of using the Bible Skill and Object Lesson ideas to lead your group.

Look for ways of using these ideas, in addition to the questions included on the Discussion Plan page.

5. Read the Dig Deeper feature (page four of each session), looking for ways of using that information when leading the group.

The information found in the Dig Deeper feature is available only in *QuickSource*.

6. Review and refine.

- Add transition ideas to move from one question to the next.
- Consult the *Explore the Bible* Extra page (goExploreTheBible.com/leaderextras) for an idea about using a current news event to begin and end the group time.
- Listen to the weekly *Explore the Bible* adult podcast to gain further insights about this week’s study. The podcast can be found on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, Google Podcasts, goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training, or on MinistryGrid (MinistryGrid.com/ExploreTheBible).

7. Gather the items needed to lead the group.

If you plan on using a visual from the *Explore the Bible Leader Pack* or creating your own (see p. 65 for a listing of items and suggested sessions for using them), do so early in the week. Be sure to have extra copies of the *Personal Study Guide* on hand to be given to guests.

8. Arrive early.

The group time starts when the first person arrives. Make sure you are that person so you can set the tone and direction for the group Bible study time.

9. Lead the group in a time of Bible study, following your plan.

10. Evaluate the group time.

Note what you learned about the people in the group as well as things you may need to work on to improve as a teacher. Also make sure any follow-up actions promised to the group are carried out.

Using *QuickSource* as a **Supplement**.

Leader Guide + QuickSource

As a supplement to the *Explore the Bible Adult Leader Guide*.

After completing your study using the commentary provided in the *Explore the Bible Leader Guide*, consult the Key Words section, the Talking Points page, and the Dig Deeper feature for additional insight or as a review. Reflect on the “Bonus” questions in the Discussion Plan and the extra questions provided in For Further Discussion, and add those to your plan as appropriate.

Daily Discipleship Guide + QuickSource

As a supplement to the Leader Helps in the *Explore the Bible Adult Daily Discipleship Guide*.

Look at the Key Words section to identify additional key words not included in the *Daily Discipleship Guide*, the Talking Points page, and the Dig Deeper feature for additional insight or as a review. Reflect on the “Bonus” questions in the Discussion Plan and the extra questions provided in For Further Discussion, and add those to your plan as appropriate.

Other resources that might be helpful.

Leader Guide

Explore the Bible Adult Leader Guide provides extensive group plans and additional Bible commentary that builds confidence when preparing to lead a group. Additional teaching options based on learning styles are also included. Available at goExploreTheBible.com

Pack

Explore the Bible Adult Leader Pack provides ready-made posters and handout masters that add to the learning experience and make it easier on the teacher. DOC files of the Leader Guide commentary and Leader Guide group plans are also included as a digital download. Available at goExploreTheBible.com

Commentary

Explore the Bible Adult Commentary provides an extensive Bible commentary written by recognized conservative Bible scholars. Available at goExploreTheBible.com.



Order resources at goExploreTheBible.com

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

AUTHORSHIP

The Gospel of Mark is a concise account of the ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. While Mark's Gospel is technically anonymous, John Mark, a Jewish follower of Jesus, has long been given credit for writing it. While Mark was not one of the twelve apostles, his content had apostolic influence. Early tradition held that Mark obtained much of his information from Peter, who was his close friend as well as being an apostle. Peter even referred to Mark as "his son" in 1 Peter 5:13.

In addition to Peter's memory, Mark likely included his own experiences with Jesus. His mother, Mary, apparently opened her home for Christ followers on several occasions. For example, many scholars believe Mark's family owned the upper room where Jesus shared His final meal with the disciples before His crucifixion. That also could explain how Mark, typically described as the young man who ran away naked (Mark 14:51-52), ended up in the garden of Gethsemane on the night of Jesus's arrest.

Mark likely wrote his Gospel from Rome to a primarily Gentile audience around the time of Peter's martyrdom. Scholars usually date this between AD 64-70. It is hard to pinpoint an exact date; however, Mark's attention to Peter's failures and ongoing Christian persecution under Emperor Nero during that period support that general timeframe.

Many view Mark as the first of the four Gospels. They believe both Matthew and Luke drew from Mark's Gospel for their writings. These three Gospels are known as the "Synoptics," a name taken from the Greek phrase meaning "seen together." It underscores the close connections that biblical scholars recognize between the books, suggesting that at least one of the Gospel writers relied on the others to some extent in shaping his own account of Jesus's life, ministry, death, and resurrection.

ORIGINAL AUDIENCE

As noted, the Gospel of Mark was primarily written for Gentile Christians, possibly for his companions in the Roman church. Throughout the Gospel, he explained many Jewish customs that would have not been familiar to Gentiles living in Rome at that time.

Mark also translated numerous Aramaic words and phrases so his readers could understand them. In addition, Mark used several Latin terms rather than the Greek, likely as a way to help his Roman readers. He rarely quoted from the Old Testament because that would have been more compelling for Jews than for Gentiles.

While Mark's Gospel was written for Roman Gentiles, its purpose was clear in declaring Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God. His opening statement affirmed that Jesus was God's Son, the Messiah. He also focused on the coming of God's kingdom, which carried messianic overtones.

Within the narrative of Jesus's ministry, Mark provided a message of salvation for anyone willing to repent and put their faith in Jesus. Many believers in Rome had already heard of the good news, including some who may have heard directly from Jesus during His time on earth. But Mark affirmed the message with a pastor's heart, challenging believers to apply the gospel to their daily lives. In that sense, Mark's Gospel focuses more on theology than on biography.

OCCASION

Mark's Gospel can be divided into three primary sections: Jesus's ministry around Galilee, His journey toward Jerusalem, and the Passion Week. Throughout Mark's narrative, he emphasized action. The frequent use of "immediately" or similar terms underscores movement as it jumps from one scene to another within the daily ministry of Jesus.



When compared to the other Gospels, Mark also drew attention to Jesus's perfect humanity and deity, highlighting His emotions as well as His miracles and teaching.

There is much debate on the Gospel of Mark's "longer ending" (16:9-20), which could be considered a fourth section. Questions about these verses have centered on the lack of continuity and a shift in writing style. Many scholars contend that the verses were likely added later by scribes as a way to complete the narrative with eyewitness accounts of post-resurrection appearances and Jesus's ascension. While it may not have been original to Mark, the content does correlate to material provided by other Gospel writers, meaning it is trustworthy.

MAJOR THEMES

Son of God/Son of Man: The phrase "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" provides strong affirmation for Jesus's full deity. Throughout Mark's Gospel, the Lord demonstrated His divine power in numerous ways. This would include His authority over creation (4:35-41; 6:45-52), demonic forces (5:1-20), and disease (5:21-43). He also displayed His power over death by raising people from the dead (5:21-43) and by being raised from the dead Himself (16:1-14). Jesus also claimed deity through His right to forgive sin (2:1-12).

But Jesus also referred to Himself as the "Son of Man" (see Mark 2:10), a title that emphasizes His full humanity. But for ancient readers, especially those who knew the Old Testament Scriptures, that name would have meant so much more. The prophet Daniel used it in reference to the promised Messiah (Dan. 7:13).

Lordship: Each account of Jesus's acts demonstrates His lordship and authority. Jesus is Lord over Satan, as evident in His defeat of the accuser's temptations (1:12-13) and in casting out demons (5:1-20). Jesus is Lord over sickness as seen in His healing the

sick, whether it be a simple fever (1:29-31) or the terrifying trauma of leprosy (1:40-44). He showed Himself as Lord over nature by calming storms and walking on water (4:35-41; 6:48-50). Jesus is Lord over the Sabbath and is the foundation and fulfillment of the law (2:23-28). Although Mark did not include many of Jesus's sermons and teachings, the power of Jesus's authoritative message captivated the crowds (1:22).

Discipleship: From the calling of His first disciples (1:14-20) and appointing the twelve apostles (3:13-19) to the commissioning of the church (6:7-12; 16:15), Jesus invested in the lives of the believers who would carry on His mission after His ascension. In His preaching, Jesus not only taught kingdom truths to the masses, but He also instructed committed followers by precept and example. On occasion, He had to rebuke the Twelve for their lack of faith (4:40), yet they grew in their understanding and their confidence in Him.

Suffering and Death: Mark talked about Jesus's suffering and death more than any other Gospel writer. Jesus prophesied His crucifixion and resurrection three times (8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34). Further, He sometimes asked individuals to keep His identity or His deeds a secret (1:34,44; 3:12; 5:43; 7:36-37; 8:26,30; 9:9). These requests seem puzzling until we recall Jesus's focus on accomplishing His primary mission: dying for sin. He asked for secrecy so that His mission would not be hindered by those who wanted Him to behave only as a political deliverer (a kingly Messiah) or as a miracle-working prophet.

OUTLINE

- I. Prologue to the Gospel (Mark 1:1–13)
 - II. Jesus’s Ministry in Galilee (Mark 1:14–8:21)
 - III. On the Way to Jerusalem (Mark 8:22–10:52)
 - IV. A Week in Jerusalem (Mark 11:1–16:8)
 - V. Appendix: Jesus’s Appearances (Mark 16:9–20)
-

Introduced!

Jesus is the eternal Son of God.

Mark 1:1-13

1 The **beginning** **A** of the **gospel** **B** of Jesus **Christ**, **C** the **Son of God**. **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** **D** for the Lord; make his paths straight! **4** John came baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of **repentance** **E** for the **forgiveness** **F** of sins. **5** **The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem** **G** 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** **H** the Spirit **drove** **I** him into the wilderness. **13** He was in the wilderness **forty days**, **J** being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and the angels were serving him.

For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at goExploreTheBible.com.

Exploring 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** The Greek word *euangelion* can also be translated “good news” (NIV).
- C** Equivalent of “Messiah” or “anointed one.” The Jews were expecting a military leader, but Jesus came to save us from our sins.
- D** 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.
- E** 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.
- F** “Change one’s mind.” In this context, it refers to a deliberate turning from sin.
- G** To release from an obligation or remission
- H** According to some estimates, more than 300,000 people came to be baptized by John.
- I** The Greek word (*euthys*) can also be translated “at once” (NIV).
- J** Mark used the Greek verb *ekballō* seventeen times, often in relation to demonic exorcisms. Also rendered “drove out” (ESV; NIV) or “impelled” (NASB).
- K** 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).



Prophecy (Mark 1:1-3)

- Mark introduced his account by explaining that his testimony was about the gospel of Jesus, whom he recognized to be the Son of God.
- Mark pointed to Old Testament prophecies that a messenger would prepare the way for the Messiah.

Prepared (Mark 1:4-8)

- Mark explained that John the Baptist called for a baptism of repentance, attracting people from around Jerusalem and encouraging them to confess their sins.
- John declared that he would be followed by a greater Person who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

Baptized (Mark 1:9-13)

- Mark explained that Jesus was baptized by John.
- As Jesus came out of the water, the Holy Spirit descended on Him, and God the Father proclaimed Him to be His well-pleasing Son. All three members of the Godhead were present.
- Jesus was then driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he was tempted by Satan.

Summary Statements

Jesus is the eternal Son of God.

- 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.

Memory Verse

Mark 1:11

Key Doctrine

God the Son

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

ENGAGE

What introductions do you remember most clearly? How did the introduction impact the nature of that relationship? (PSG, p. 10)

- All your relationships have something in common. In one way or another, you were introduced to that person.
- Every relationship has some type of an introduction, and being introduced to someone can change your life forever.

EXPLORE

1. PROPHECY (MARK 1:1-3)

In what way was the coming of Jesus a “beginning”? (PSG, p. 12)

- 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, the coming of Christ to earth was and remains unparalleled.
- Mark wrote “a Gospel,” and it communicates “the gospel” to us. A summary of the gospel could be stated like this: *The declaration of all that God did through His Son, Jesus Christ, to reconcile us back to Himself.* Part of this declaration is that Jesus is the Son of God.

How did John’s fulfillment of prophecy validate the role of Jesus as Messiah? (PSG, p. 13)

- 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. Mark had a strong confidence in the authority of God’s Word. We know that Jesus is the Messiah because the Bible tells us so.
- It is easy to lose sight of how much time passed before the promises of the Messiah were fulfilled. We live in a world of instant feedback. However, God rarely provides immediate gratification. While God’s Son did come into a moment of time, it was the moment of His choosing.

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

2. PREPARED (MARK 1:4-8)

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

- John’s ministry was one of preparation. His preaching attracted large numbers, but it was no feel-good message. Rather, it was a message of repentance and confession.
- John’s attire called to mind ancient prophets (2 Kings 1:8).
- John was a charismatic figure, and people could have fixated on him, not the Messiah. So, he took pains to ensure that the spotlight would be directed toward Jesus.

Bonus: How did John demonstrate humility? Why are people drawn to humility?

- Untying someone’s sandals was a menial task reserved for slaves. John felt that he was not even worthy to perform the most menial task for the coming Messiah.
- John’s mission was to introduce people to Jesus. Like John, believers are tasked with pointing others to Jesus. This requires a humble spirit that emphasizes how great He is.

3. BAPTIZED (MARK 1:9-13)

Bonus: If you have been baptized, what do you remember about that day?

- Brevity is a characteristic of Mark’s Gospel. An example is the account of Jesus’s baptism. Mark simply recorded that Jesus was baptized in the Jordan by John.
- Since Jesus came up out of the water, we can safely assume that He had been immersed in it.
- In that moment, the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. In addition, God’s voice affirmed Jesus as His beloved Son. All three members of the Trinity actively participated in Jesus’s baptism.

How should God’s declaration of Jesus as the Son inform a person’s declaration of faith in Jesus? (PSG, p. 17)

- The Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted for forty days. By not yielding to temptation, Jesus validated His sufficiency as our Savior and as Son of God.
- Since Mark was likely writing to believers whose lives were threatened by persecution, they would find comfort in knowing that divine aid was also available to them as they faced a wilderness or wild animals in their lives.

In what ways does your belief in Jesus as the Son of God bring joy to your life? (PSG, p. 17)

CHALLENGE

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? (PSG, p. 18)

Encourage individuals to reflect on characteristics from John’s life that would help point others to Jesus.

Pick one characteristic and develop at least one action step that you can take this week to begin building it into your life. (PSG, p. 18)



For Further Discussion

Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.



BIBLE SKILL (P. 13, PSG)

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?*

Lead the group to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 13). Invite volunteers to read the passages and discuss what these passages teach about John the Baptist as he prepared the way for the Lord.

OBJECT LESSON: HONEY AND BUGS

Secure a jar of honey and a jar of bugs. (*Note: Jars of bugs can often be found in the hunting/fishing departments of sports/outdoor retailers.*) Invite a volunteer to read Mark 1:6. Ask: *Why do you think John wore non-traditional clothing and ate locusts and honey?*

Share that John could have been making a statement against the materialism of his day, but he was certainly identifying with the prophets of the Old Testament. Suggest that he wanted people to focus solely on his message of repentance. Ask: *How do our lifestyle choices point people toward the message of Christ or away from the message of Christ?*



TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Mark revealed Jesus’s conflicts with human leaders, but these verses highlight His confrontations with Satan. Mark made it clear that Jesus didn’t face temptation casually. He was driven to the wilderness by the Spirit and submitted to God’s direction.

Some scholars contend that Mark used this testing as a contrast to Adam’s fall in Eden or Israel’s failures in the desert. Whether that was his intention or not, it is evident that the circumstances were orchestrated by God. Mark used “immediately” (Greek, *euthys*) to emphasize urgency. He also used the Greek word *ekball* (“drove”), which often described authority.

The task was urgent, and the battle that began at the start of Jesus’s ministry continued through the Roman cross and the empty tomb. In a day when leaders sought only to satisfy their own desires, Jesus demonstrated a different way to live, one of service to God rather than to self.

Mark is the only Gospel writer to mention Jesus “with the wild animals” (1:13). Scholars are not certain if the animals were on Jesus’s side or posed some threat. Mark’s original audience—made up of Roman Gentiles—probably would have associated

such animals with persecution. The context of the desert would have supported this understanding.

Scripture makes it clear that this is not the last temptation of Christ. Jesus was consistently tried and tested in His earthly ministry. Believers can be encouraged today that Jesus understands our temptations and stands with us in these battles.

BONUS CONTENT



Son of God

Mark 1:1 declares Jesus to be the Son of God. While Mark did not use this title in his narrative of the temptation, other Gospel writers did (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). Learn more about Mark’s use of the term “Son of God” in this Gospel.