



# The Gospel of Mark

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## Questions for Personal Reflection or Small Group Study

In addition to the questions below, the Reflection and Application sections throughout this commentary suggest various ways of acting on the message of Mark's Gospel.

### Mark 1

1. To judge from this chapter alone, what would have been the blessings and difficulties involved in being one of Jesus' first disciples? How have you experienced these blessings and difficulties in your own relationship with Jesus?
2. What does this first chapter of Mark's Gospel tell you about the kind of person Jesus is? Cite particular details to support your view.
3. If you had lived in Capernaum when Jesus arrived there, would you have wanted him to call you to follow him? Why?
4. Presumably, the people of Capernaum were not expecting Jesus and all that he did among them. When have you unexpectedly experienced Jesus' presence in your life? How has this affected the way you relate to him?
5. To whom could you help bring the good news of Jesus and God's kingdom this week? How could you do it?
6. Is there something in Jesus' actions and attitudes in vv. 35–39 that he is inviting you to imitate?

### Mark 2

1. What can you learn for your relationship with Jesus from the various ways people relate to him in this chapter of the Gospel?
2. What message does the story of the paralyzed man (vv. 1–12) have for you? How can you respond?
3. Levi, like Jesus' other disciples, put aside other things in order to follow him. What are your priorities in life? What is the basis of your priorities? Does the example of Jesus' first disciples inspire you to reconsider your priorities?
4. In vv. 21–22, Jesus speaks of making a clean break with the old. Is he calling you to make a break with something old in your life?
5. Jesus put human needs ahead of strict adherence to the traditions for keeping the Sabbath. What kind of priority do you give to the needs of people around you?

### Mark 3

1. Jesus takes the initiative to heal a man on the Sabbath (vv. 1–6). When have you experienced Jesus taking the initiative in your life?
2. Where is Jesus calling you to share in the apostolate of his Church? What might you do to respond more fully to his call?
3. Jesus' relatives did not understand him (v. 21). Have members of your family, your friends, or others been critical of your efforts to follow Christ? What have you learned about dealing with this problem constructively?
4. Jesus speaks about his power over evil (v. 27). When have you experienced his power over evil or witnessed it in the life of someone you know? What can be learned from this experience?
5. In what ways have you experienced the Church as your family? How could you help someone else experience the Church as a loving family?

### Mark 4

1. What is involved in truly hearing God's word? Can a person become better at hearing God's word?
2. When have you been good, receptive soil for the seed of God's word? What kind of harvest has it borne in your life? When have you been stony soil, resistant to God's word? Why? What was the result? What did you learn from this experience?
3. Where is God's kingdom trying to take root in your life at present? Are you responding? Why?
4. Jesus mentions obstacles to responding to God's word (v. 19) that may seem almost inevitable. How can a person get free from "worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things"?
5. When have you experienced God's grace bringing something about in you that you could not have attained by yourself? How might the memory of this experience give you encouragement today?
6. Which of Jesus' parables in this chapter seems most to bear a message for you? What is that message?
7. What was the greatest "storm" you have sailed through in life? How was Jesus with you in it?

### Mark 5

1. Jesus removes the evil spirits that mar the image of God in the Gerasene man (vv. 1–20). Are you allowing anything to mar God's image in you?
2. Is there anyone you know whose problems cause you to remain at a distance? In what ways could you express love for them instead?
3. Are you sometimes uncomfortable with Jesus? If so, what is it about him that makes you uncomfortable? Are you willing to trust in him and commit yourself to him completely?
4. In what way is Jesus' command to the man freed of evil spirits (v. 19) also a word to you?
5. Have there been occasions where you merely "bumped up against" Jesus instead of touching him in faith? How could you imitate the woman who approached him with faith (vv. 21–34)?
6. In what area of your life are you especially in need of Jesus' power to save? What could you do to turn to him in faith?

### Mark 6

1. Has God ever given you encouragement and wisdom through someone who seemed too ordinary, too lacking in talents or accomplishments? What lesson did you learn?
2. The requirements Jesus placed on the disciples he sent out (vv. 8–9) would have lent credibility to their announcement of the coming of God's kingdom. What qualities in a speaker tend to make his or her message credible to listeners? Is there something in your life that would need to change in order for your witness to Jesus to become credible in someone's eyes?
3. In what ways do Jesus' instructions about traveling light and relying on God (vv. 8–10) apply to you in your particular situation in life?
4. Do you know someone who might benefit from a little encouragement to receive the Sacrament of the Sick? What kind of encouragement might you offer?
5. What do Jesus' words in v. 31 mean for your life?
6. Recall a vacation or holiday when someone's urgent needs displaced the opportunity to relax. How well did you rise to the occasion? Would you handle a similar situation differently in the future?
7. When have you seen provisions surprisingly, or even miraculously, increase in order to meet someone's needs? What effect has this experience had on you?
8. What message does Jesus' command in v. 37 bear for you?

## Mark 7

1. In marriage, parenting, and many other human relationships, it is easy to become fixated on relatively minor matters and lose sight of what is most important. What light does the incident in vv. 1–23 shed on this tendency?
2. What sorts of things today are involved in honoring one's father and mother?
3. Jesus speaks about the sinful attitudes that are deep-rooted in fallen human beings (vv. 21–23). When have you experienced a change of heart in your relationship with God or another person? What helped to bring you to this point of conversion? Where in your life is God calling you to a deeper change of heart? What do you need to do to cooperate with his grace?
4. How does the Syrophenician woman's way of relating to Jesus compare with yours? Is there something you might learn from her?

## Mark 8

1. The disciples seem repeatedly to forget the lessons they learn about Jesus (compare v. 4 with 6:37–44; see 8:17–21). Are there lessons about Jesus from your own experience that you tend to forget? What could you do to remind yourself?
2. Jesus gives thanks before the meal (v. 6). Do you thank God before eating? What are some of the other times in everyday life that it would be appropriate to stop and give thanks to God?
3. What is your own, personal answer to Jesus' question in v. 27? What implications does your answer bear for how you ought to relate to him?
4. Reread v. 33. When have you realized that you were thinking about yourself or others in a human way that was quite different from the way that God thinks? How have you acted on this insight?
5. Even when a person accepts the truth of Jesus' statements in vv. 34–37, losing one's life in order to gain it is a difficult challenge. What makes it possible?

## Mark 9

1. By his transfiguration (vv. 2–8), Jesus strengthened the faith of three disciples' for the difficult situations that lay ahead. Have there been times when God has done something unusual to strengthen your faith in the midst of difficult circumstances?
2. What distractions or sins get in the way of you responding to God's word in v. 7? What should you do to remedy this problem?
3. Does the exchange between the Father and Jesus in vv. 22–23 mirror anything in your own relationship with Jesus? Does this episode (vv. 14–29) indicate a better way of relating to him?
4. Why do the disciples remain silent in v. 34?
5. How is it that the disciples could have been arguing over the topic mentioned in v. 34 immediately after Jesus told them about his impending suffering (vv. 30–31)? Are there times when God's word makes little impression on you? Why is that?
6. Reread v. 37. Are there people who are viewed as too unimportant to care about in our society? Do you share this attitude to some degree?
7. Reread vv. 42–48. Are there any "hands" or "feet" of your own that you should consider getting rid of?

## Mark 10

1. Think of a married couple that you have known who have demonstrated their deep love for each other. How could their example inspire you to love—either in marriage or in some other relationship?
2. What can all Christians do—whether married or unmarried—to support couples in their marriages today?
3. What qualities distinguish the childlikeness that Jesus speaks about in v. 15 from childish immaturity? How can a person become more childlike while at the same time becoming less childish?
4. While Jesus' words in v. 21 are tailored to the particular man with whom he is speaking, his words also have a meaning for each of us. What meaning do they have for you?
5. Is there some particular invitation that you hear in Jesus' words in vv. 29–30?
6. Being the slave of all (v. 44) is a tall order. Is there some modest step you could take today or this week toward becoming a better servant of those God has given you to care for?

## Mark 11

1. People welcomed Jesus with various expressions of honor when he arrived at Jerusalem (vv. 8–10). Are there any expressions of devotion with which you welcome his presence in your life each day?
2. If Jesus were to come and examine your life for the fruit you have borne for him, what absence might be especially notable? What could you do to better respond to his grace in this area of your life?
3. When you participate in the liturgy, is your mind sometimes like the busy temple plaza, filled with thoughts of "selling and buying" (v. 15)? What could you do to overcome this problem?
4. Is there a difficult situation in your life in which Jesus' words in v. 22 are his particular message to you?

## Mark 12

1. What "vineyard"—what sphere of responsibility, large or small—has God entrusted to you? Do you handle it with a constant desire that God would be pleased with the results of your leadership and care?
2. What are some of the practical expressions, in our time, of giving absolute, unswerving allegiance to God rather than to "caesar"? What are the implications in your own life?
3. What difference does the hope of resurrection make for you as you confront sorrows and losses in this life?
4. What saint is especially meaningful to you as a model of loving God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength? How has this saint inspired you to love God more deeply?
5. Who are the members of your parish that are like the widow Jesus speaks about in vv. 43–44, people who make seemingly small but costly contributions to the life of the Church? How might they be given honor and recognition?

## Mark 13

1. What are some safeguards against the kind of deception that Jesus speaks about in vv. 5–6?
2. Are you sometimes afraid to speak out about Jesus? Do you find help in v. 11? How could you respond to what Jesus says here?
3. In this chapter, what are Jesus' main concerns for his disciples?
4. How much support do Jesus' words in vv. 7–8 and 32–33 give to modern attempts to determine at what stage we might be in God's plans for the end of the world?
5. In what ways might you respond practically to Jesus' instructions in v. 33?

## Mark 14

1. What would motivate someone to an act of such seeming extravagance toward Jesus as that of the woman in v. 3? Have you ever given Jesus an extravagant gift?
2. What could you do to become more open to Jesus' gift of himself to you in the Eucharist?
3. Have you ever discovered that, like Peter (vv. 29–31), you had an exaggerated estimation of your own loyalty to Jesus? How has this discovery affected you?
4. Reread v. 38. Faced with temptation, do you pray? Faced with suffering, do you take Jesus' prayer in v. 36 as your model?
5. Do you ever meditate on Jesus' sufferings for you? (See the Reflection and Application section on pages 301–2 for some suggestions on ways to do this.)

## Mark 15

1. What message of God's love for you does Mark's account of Jesus' death communicate to you?
2. What are the implications of being the follower of one who willingly gave his life in great suffering for the benefit of others? What are the implications for you?
3. When have you observed—or experienced—God acting in a powerful way through human weakness and suffering? What did you learn about God from this?
4. Have you ever felt abandoned by God? What does the scene at the cross (vv. 33–37) say to a person who feels abandoned by God?

## Mark 16

1. Why did God first make Jesus' resurrection known to women who had followed him rather than to the male disciples?
2. What has given you faith that Jesus has risen from the dead?
3. What difference does Jesus' resurrection make in the way you live?
4. How can you respond to Jesus' command in v. 15?
5. In what ways has this reading of Mark's Gospel deepened your understanding of Jesus and the relationship he wants you to have with him?