
Mark

The Perfect Servant

The Gospel of **Mark** presents Jesus as the Perfect Servant, focusing on Jesus' humility and action. Many miracles are recorded, including two not found in the other gospel accounts: healing the deaf and mute man (**Mark 7:31-37**) and healing the blind man at Bethsaida (**Mark 8:22-25**).

This gospel does not start with Jesus' genealogy or birth. Instead it jumps immediately into the ministry of John the Baptist and the service of Jesus. Mark dispenses with Jesus' divine titles, includes less of Jesus' messages, and focuses on what Jesus did. In **Mark 10:45**, Jesus said that He came to this world to serve instead of being served.

Key Word: Immediately

Mark is fast-paced with events cascading one after another. The key word "immediately" comes from the Greek word "eutheos" which appears 42 times in the book.

The Author: Mark

John Mark wrote the Gospel of Mark. He lived in Jerusalem with his mother Mary (**Acts 12:12**), joined Paul on his first missionary trip (**Acts 12:25**), then quit the mission and returned home (**Acts 13:13**). Paul did not want to take Mark on his second trip (**Acts 15:38**) so Mark joined Barnabas on his missionary journey (**Acts 15:39**). Eventually Mark became a trusted and valued friend of both Peter and Paul (**1Pet 5:13, 2Tim 4:11**).

Service and Sacrifice

Mark has two sections. The first half of the book (ending in **Mark 8:30**) focuses on Jesus' service. The second half of the book (beginning in **Mark 8:31**) focuses on Jesus' sacrifice on the cross.

Personal Reflection and Application

Read **Mark 3:1-6**. Compare and contrast the attitudes and actions of the legalistic Pharisees to Jesus' attitudes and actions. Are you more like the Pharisees or like Jesus? Be honest here. Are you making things a priority that Jesus never did? Are you focusing on the nonessentials?

Read **Mark 4:1-20**. Consider the four types of soil that picture the different responses to hearing the Word of God. Which type of soil best describes your response to hearing the

Word of God? In what ways do you want to make changes to your life and the way you respond to God's Word?

In **Mark 7**, Jesus speaks of the dangers of putting too much importance on ceremony and tradition. Jesus says this can affect our hearts and how we worship. **What traditions or ceremonies might be affecting your heart or how you worship?**

Meditate on **Mark 8:34-38**. This section is a sobering reminder of the cost to follow Christ. Circle what key words are convicting to you. Underline the key words that encourage you.

Read **Mark 10:17-31**. Wealth can foster feelings of arrogance and make us less receptive to the teaching of Christ. Poverty can foster jealousy and envy of others. **In both instances, what is the problem? Which attitude is a greater danger to you? What are the riches of salvation that everyone can share equally?**

Mark 11:25-26 cautions us to not let lack of forgiveness hinder our prayers. **Are your prayers hindered because of your unwillingness to be like Jesus and forgive?**

Read **Mark 13:28-37**. Though it's difficult to imagine, at the end, heaven and earth as we know them will cease to exist. The only thing with permanence will be God's Word. In what ways does this distress you or comfort you? Jesus warns us to WATCH because

He will come suddenly. When the Master returns, what will you be doing? Will you be sleeping, or will you be praying and studying His Word?

Read **Mark 14:3-9**. It is easy for us to find ourselves judging what others do even though we have no way of knowing the motivation behind their actions. Jesus tells those who criticized the woman to "Let her alone." Apart from confronting others for their visible sins, it is not our place to evaluate the worthiness of their actions. As Paul says in **1Corinthians 4:4**, "He who judges me is the Lord."

Have you ever overslept? In **Mark 14:32-42**, Jesus commissioned the inner three disciples (Peter, James, and John) to stay awake and pray for His protection. They failed. They could not stay awake to pray. Are you sleeping through the purpose God has for you? Are you aware of His leadings and promptings? How can you be more aware of His activity in your life this week?

Small Group Conversation Guide

Mark begins with John the Baptist. How does John give us an example of the way to prepare for Christ (**Mark 1:1-4**)? Notice his lifestyle and humble attitude. In what way is this an example for us? Discuss the advantages and drawbacks of fitting in with the "normal" lifestyle of the times. Where should we place our focus? If Jesus were sitting with your group, what do you think He would say should be the "new normal"? **Romans 12:1-2** says that we are not to conform any longer to the pattern of this world. What lifestyle changes do you need to make so you don't pattern your life / family after the world's mold?

"At this moment, either you just came out of a storm, you are in one right now, or you are headed into one" (Richard Krejcir). Storms in life are natural and normal. In fact, Jesus said that you will face troubles in this life (**John 16:33**). However, after reading **Mark 4:35-41**, how does knowing that Jesus can calm any storm (physical, spiritual, emotional, financial, relational) give you comfort in His power? Do you believe He can calm your storm? Are there other verses that help you gain a godly perspective while in the midst of storms? If so, share those with the group. What are some examples of being delivered from the storms of your life?

Read [Mark 2:1-12](#). Everyone needs help to come to Jesus ([1Cor 3:5-9](#)). Everyone faces obstacles to come to Jesus ([2Cor 4:1-4](#)). Discuss with the group how someone helped YOU come to Christ. What did they say, or do, or not do that made Christianity appealing? With that understanding, are there people in your life that need YOU to bring them to Christ? Who are they? Take some time, as a group, to list those names and pray for them. Don't just pray and ask God to do all the work. Pray asking God for opportunities to share with them! Pray for boldness and clarity as you share. Pray for a receptive heart as they receive your message and hear your story. If you are scared to share, read the account in [Mark 5:18-20](#) and simply do what this man did!

Read [Mark 7:8,12](#) where Mark records Jesus' bold words to religious leaders of His day. He confronted their superficial "religion" based on traditions. In essence, Jesus says traditions are like bricks. We can use them for good by building churches and hospitals or we can use them for destruction by breaking windows or beating people. **While traditions can be useful and meaningful, if we take them above the Lord's command and Jesus' teachings, they are dangerous.** Sometimes, people begin to focus on the tradition rather than the original purpose that made the tradition meaningful. Discuss what traditions (personal, family, church) are good. Discuss which traditions have the potential of leading people astray.

In [Mark 8](#), Jesus brilliantly asked the apostles who people thought He was. Then He turned the question on them asking who they thought He was. In our world today, what misconceptions do people have about Christ's identity? How do His works and teachings contradict those misconceptions? Who do you say Jesus is? Who is He to YOU?

Read [Mark 10:1-16](#). What key points did Jesus make about marriage? In what way

does the parents' desire for Jesus to touch and pray for their children exemplify how we should desire to bring our children to God?

If you could boil the essence of Christianity down to one commandment, it would be, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength' ([Mark 12:29-30](#)). What does it mean to love the Lord with your whole being? The second commandment is like the first, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' ([Mark 12:31](#)). How can you show that you love your neighbor? Who is your neighbor?

A cornerstone supports and holds up surrounding stones. Mark refers to Jesus as the Chief Cornerstone who supports and builds us as a spiritual house. Read [Mark 12:10](#) and [1Pet 2:4-5](#).

As a living stone (Christ follower) what role are you playing as part of His spiritual house? As a group, list spiritual sacrifices that would be acceptable to God.

One of the most endearing acts of genuine worship in the Gospels is Mary anointing Jesus with her costly alabaster flask of fragrant oil ([Mark 14:3-9](#)). A jar like that was worth a year's wages! Think what it would be like to write a check for your gross annual income and give it to Jesus! That's what Mary did as an offering to her Lord. Discuss ways we can show similar sacrifices in our everyday lives.

Read [Mark 14:26-31](#) and [66-72](#). Peter was determined to not abandon Jesus, no matter what. In spite of that determination, Peter denied Jesus three times. What caused Peter's failure? Read [John 21:15-23](#) for how Jesus restored Peter. We have all failed the Lord at some time in our lives, yet He is gracious to restore us back to Him. Discuss your story of God's restoration in your life.

Leadership Principles from Mark

Make Ready

The Gospel of Mark records that John the Baptist was the one who would prepare the way for the Lord ([Mark 1:1-4](#)). John the Baptist fostered an environment for making people ready for greater things! He gave his followers a vision for what was coming. He expanded their horizons. He gave them hope and direction. As a leader, how can you build effective vision casting into your weekly rhythm and thus “make people ready” for what is coming?

Strong, Yet Humble

One lesson from John the Baptist’s life is that he was a humble leader. He was willing to live a life of solitude and constantly point others to Him “who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose” ([Mark 1:7](#)). Humble but strong leaders, resolute in their values and beliefs, make a lasting impact. Jim Collins, in his book “Good to Great,” says that this kind of leader is at the top of the leadership pyramid. Here are some questions to ask yourself. Are you more consumed with your EGO or with people? When you serve others, what’s your true motive – helping them or helping you? If no one saw you, would you still serve? Are you able to give someone else the credit or do you hog it all? When others succeed, what’s your initial reaction?

Sow, Wait, Rest

Read [Mark 4:26-29](#). Consider the process of sow, wait, rest. Be fully committed to sow the seed. Do it diligently; however, avoid being so compulsive that you think you can sprout the seed without God’s help. To achieve results, do your part and leave the rest in God’s hands.

Facing Storms

Read [Mark 4:35-41](#). Leaders face storms. Turning to God during these times provides perspective and strength. It helps us keep our priorities straight, gives hope where we see none, and calms us so we can demonstrate emotional control to those under our care. The more believers understand that God is in control, the more they find peace in difficult situations. This peace that passes understanding is a powerful example to influence those around us ([Php 4:7](#) and [John 16:33](#)).

Time to Move Forward

Read [Mark 6:1-12](#). As a leader, you will always face opposition. It is unrealistic to expect agreement from everyone. Recognize when it is time to move forward to focus on the positive. What do you do when some followers will not follow? How do you react to opposing forces that just won’t change? What do you do when collaboration and a “win” for all parties is not possible?

What Do I Have?

Rather than look at what they don’t have and complain, true leaders look at what they DO have and make the most of it. That’s what we see Jesus doing in [Mark 8](#) as He feeds the multitude.

Others looked at the crowd and said, “We don’t have enough food.” Jesus asked, “What **do** we have?” He was able to multiply the loaves and fish to accomplish His greater purpose. As a leader, follow His example and ask, “What **do** I have?” Then, **ask God to supernaturally leverage those resources to make the most impact and influence.**

Confident Life Mission

There will always be people who want to hijack God's vision for your life. As a leader, you need to be confident in the mission that God has given you. If you are, you can remain balanced when others try to force **their** agenda on your life. This is exactly what happened when Peter "rebuked" Jesus and told Him that He did not need to go and suffer. How did Jesus respond? Read [Mark 8:27-33](#). **Jesus was absolutely clear on His life's mission.** He forcefully corrected Peter's attempt to interfere with God's plan. **Are you crystal clear on YOUR life's mission?** Or, do convincing people easily sway you?

Benefits of Servant Leaders

List five words that describe the best leader you've known. Read [Mark 10:42-45](#). As a leader, how can you also be a servant of your people? In what ways will this make you different from the cultural norm? What does humility look like in a leadership role? Often, we describe these types of characteristics as the "soft side" of leadership. Do you agree or disagree? Why? **List the benefits and risks of using the servant leader approach.**

Foot-shaped Mouth

Peter was the "**Apostle with the Foot-Shaped Mouth.**" His leadership style was "ready, **fire**, aim!" An example is Peter's reaction ([Mark 9:2-9](#)) to Jesus' Transfiguration. Peter was privileged to see The Lord's true identify. In verse 5, Peter said, "...let us make three tabernacles..." Why did Peter say that? Verse 6 reveals, "because he did not know what to say..." When you don't know **what** to say, is that a good **time** to speak? There is great value in knowing not only **what** to say, but in knowing **when** to say it. As a leader, strive to use words in a way that makes the most impact. Pray, asking God for the wisdom ([Jas 1:5](#)) to use the **right words** at the **right time!** Your followers will thank you for it.

Veil Torn from the Top

Study [Mark 15:38](#). Notice how the veil was torn from the top to the bottom just after Jesus died. If someone on earth had torn the veil, the tear would have gone from bottom to top. To tear the veil from top to bottom, means whoever tore it was positioned above the veil. Read [Ephesians 2:13-18](#). His sacrifice tore open that which separates us from God. Through Him we have access to God. As much as you may want to, you cannot tear open the veil for others. You can do your best to introduce them to Christ and live a life that reflects Him, but each person must make a choice to accept Christ.

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter.

Try these:

01. What Jesus' disciples left to follow Him	02. What the four men did to get their friend to Jesus
03. Who Jesus said were His mother, brother, and sister	04. What Jesus did to calm the stormy sea
05. How people reacted to Jesus healing the demoniac	06. What role the disciples had in feeding the 5,000
07. What Jesus did to heal the deaf and mute man	08. How Jesus responds to those ashamed of Him
09. Why Jesus' disciples were arguing on the road	10. What Jesus said about those keeping kids from Him
11. Why the scribes and the priests feared Jesus	12. What Jesus said about paying taxes
13. Who knows the day and hour of Christ's return	14. What happens when a shepherd (leader) is struck
15. What inscription was above Jesus on the cross	16. What the women initially said after visiting the tomb